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उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत ।

PRABUDDHA BHARATA

Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!

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❧ Traditional Wisdom ❧

THE GOAL OF LIFE

यं यं वापि स्मरन् भावं त्यजत्यन्ते कलेवरम् ।
तं तमेवैति कौन्तेय सदा तद्भावभावितः ॥

Whatever object a man thinks of when he leaves his body, that alone he attains, O son of Kunti, being always absorbed in its thought. (*Bhagavadgītā*, 8.6)

तस्मात् सर्वेषु कालेषु मामनुस्मर युध्य च ।
मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिमामिवैष्यस्यसंशयः ॥

Therefore, at all times, constantly remember Me and fight [the battle of life]. With your mind and understanding absorbed in Me, you will surely come to Me. (*Bhagavadgītā*, 8.7)

This temple of the body should not be kept in darkness; the lamp of Knowledge must be lighted in it. 'Light the lamp of Knowledge in your room, and look at the face of the Mother Divine. (*Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 31)

Freedom is the motive of the universe, freedom its goal. The laws of nature are the methods by which we are struggling to reach that freedom under the guidance of Mother. The universal struggle for freedom attains its highest expression in man in the conscious desire to be free. (Swami Vivekananda, *Complete Works*, 5.434)

The Atman assumes a human form in order to enjoy the bliss of liberation while living in the body. Otherwise, it is unreasonable for the ever-free Atman to be born merely to desire worldly enjoyments. The supreme goal of human life is the experience of the state of bodilessness while still in the body. (Swami Turiyananda, *Spiritual Treasures*, p. 63)

∞ This Month ∞

The five factors comprising all created beings and the manifest world, their relation to human life, the meaning of bondage and freedom—these form the subject matter of this month's editorial **The Three-plus-two Factor**.

Besides excerpts from an article by Swami Swarupanandaji, **Prabuddha Bharata—100 Years Ago** features this month homage paid to Swami Vivekananda by *Prabuddha Bharata*, by a Western disciple and by some Indian journals. It is interesting to note that *Prabuddha Bharata* for July 1902 featured not only the sad news of Swamiji's demise on 4 July 1902, but also homage paid to him by journals till 15 July 1902! Obviously the issue must have been published later than usual, but *Prabuddha Bharata's* own printing press at Mayavati then must have also been a significant factor.

On 4 July 1902, exactly a hundred years ago, the great Swami Vivekananda quit his mortal body in meditation, as predicted by his guru Sri Ramakrishna. In the second part titled 'On the Wings of Meditation' of her research article **Vivekananda: Conqueror of Death!** Ms Linda Prugh collates data on this historic event from different sources, making a vivid presentation of the last day of Swamiji's earthly sojourn and of some next-day events.

In his article **Realization of Truth and Work Excellence** Swami Nityasthanandaji analyses the twofold beneficial effect of realization: work excellence and character excellence. The author is from the Ramakrishns Ashrama, Mysore, and is Editor of *Viveka Prabha*, the Kannada journal of the Ramakrishna Order.

Need for Value-based Education in the 21st Century is an article adapted from Dr Bikas C Sanyal's paper presented at the World Philosophical Congress, Geneva, in August 1998. The author is Special Adviser, International Institute for Educational Planning, UNESCO, Paris, and Director, Maison de l'Inde, France.

Maps for Spirituality by Pravrajika Vivekaprana is an edited transcript of her talk at the Marian Foundation, Maine, USA, on 24 September 1996. A senior nun and Secretary of the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission, New Delhi, the author describes how Vedanta presents a more satisfactory map, compared to the one based on religious books interpreted by priests and the other based on science.

In his thought-provoking article **On Bettering Ourselves**, Dr S Dandapani illustrates with examples the role of id, ego and superego in personality development. A former Professor of Educational Psychology at the Regional Institute of Education, Mysore, the author is well known for the inspirational quality of his speeches and writings on education.

Avadhūta Upaniṣad is the fourth instalment of the translation of this Upanishad by Swami Atmapriyanandaji, Principal, Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira, Belur Math. The notes are based on the commentary by Upanishad Brahmayogin.

Glimpses of Holy Lives features some incidents from the life of a north Indian saint, Govindadas, and a Maharashtrian saint, Chokha Mela.

The Three-plus-two Factor

EDITORIAL

The celebrated half verse attributed to Sri Shankaracharya presents Advaita philosophy in a nutshell: '*Brahma satyariṇ jagannmithyā jīvo brahmaiva nāparaḥ*, Brahman is real and the world is unreal. The *jīva* (created being) is none other than Brahman.' The world we live, move and have our being in—is it then unreal? It is from the absolute standpoint of Brahman, the divine Reality behind. What is meant is this: As Brahman the world is real. As it appears to us, however, the world is unreal.

In practice, however, we find nothing more real than the world. Our perception of things through our five sense organs is real, our family and friends are real, and our business, employment and environment are real. More than anything else, our own little individuality—our body and mind—is very real to us. If there is anything unreal or very hazily real, it is such speculation about Divinity or Brahman. What lends reality to the world? Why should it appear real to us?

Five Factors that Make the World Real

According to Advaita, Brahman, the ultimate Reality, alone is real; the world is only an appearance. It has only a secondary order of reality. Everything in the world is characterized by five factors: Being (*astī*), the ability to be cognized (*bhāti*), attractiveness (*priyam*), form (*rūpam*) and name (*nāma*). This is true of not only inanimate things but also animate things. The first three refer to Brahman, while the last two to the world.¹ *Astī* corresponds to *sat*, being; *bhāti* corresponds to *cit*, knowledge or consciousness; and *priyam* corresponds to *ānanda*, bliss. Thus the first three refer to *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda*, or eternal Being, eternal Consciousness (Knowledge) and eternal Bliss, by

which the ultimate Reality is known. The differences in the world are due the last two factors, name and form. The divinity behind the world is Brahman while that behind living beings is the Atman. And according to the famous Vedantic *mahāvākya* (great saying) *Ayamātmā brahma*, Atman and Brahman are identical.²

Divinity in Human Beings

That the same Divinity called *Sat-cit-ānanda* is our real Self behind the body and mind will be evident on a little reflection.

Eternal Being: Every one of us believes that he or she will live forever. In the 'Yakṣa Praśna' of the *Mahābhārata* an important question the Yakṣa posed to Yudhiṣṭhira was 'What is most wonderful?' And Yudhiṣṭhira replied: '*Ahanyahani bhūtani gacchantiḥa yamālayam; Śeṣāsthāvaramicchanti kimāścaryamataḥ param*. Every day people die. Still the rest desire to live forever. What could be more wonderful than this?'³ It is our real nature, eternal Being (*sat*), that is responsible for this desire to live eternally. And indeed it is true: it is only the body that dies, not 'I', the real Self.

Eternal Consciousness: There is more knowledge explosion now than ever before. We are not satisfied with a little knowledge of anything. Whether it is about how things function or about why things happen, the more we know the better. Our real nature, eternal Knowledge, explains this thirst for knowledge in us.

Eternal Bliss: Who doesn't want unmixed happiness—pleasure without pain? In fact human life is spent in the pursuit of happiness. That we do not get happiness without misery is another matter. This desire for unmixed happiness stems from our real nature, which

is eternal Bliss. Human beings falsely look for lasting, infinite Bliss, in things finite—things of the world that lure the senses.

Finite Things Cannot Lead to Infinite Bliss

Man's search for happiness is perfectly natural and understandable. But the search is unfortunately misdirected. Lasting bliss cannot be found in the finite things of the world. But we human beings constitutionally look for joy in outside things. According to the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 'The self-existent Supreme Lord inflicted an injury upon the sense organs by creating them with outgoing tendencies. Therefore man perceives only outer objects with them, and not the inner Self.'⁴

The ears, the skin, the eyes, the tongue and the nose are the five windows (sense organs) in our system through which we perceive objects in the world. All the sense organs have a perpetual attraction for their respective sense objects. For most people the goal of life is no more than getting the maximum pleasure arising out of the contact of the sense organs with the sense objects.

Though in saner moments some people understand their helplessly being taken for a ride by the senses and the mind, they hardly resolve to do anything about it. They think that the mutual attraction between the senses and the objects will wear off by itself somehow, some day. Alas, things do not work out that way. Swami Ashokanandaji puts it beautifully:

Our mind, our senses are our betrayers. First of all, they clamour for things, and you take trouble to give them these things, then after a little while they are dissatisfied with them. That's not fair, but the mind and the senses do not care for fairness. ...

This mind and senses want to make you work for them. That is all they want. So when you have done one thing, dissatisfaction comes and you are made to do another thing. This is the way it is: because we have done something in the past, we are doing similar things in the present.⁵

Desires Are Not Quenched by Enjoyment

There is a story in the *Bhāgavata* of a king by name Yayāti. He incurred the wrath of Śukra, the preceptor of demons. Śukra cursed him to become old forthwith. With his desire for enjoyment not sated yet, the king was naturally mortified, and asked Śukra how he could get back his youth. Śukra told him that would be possible if a young man exchanged his youth for the king's old age. The king asked his eldest son if he would exchange his youth for his old age. The son declined saying that he had his own life of enjoyment before him. The second, third and fourth sons too refused to accept the king's proposal. His last son, the fifth, was young in years but advanced in virtue. He took over his father's old age on himself with joy. The king once again waxed strong with his youth, and enjoyed pleasures through his five senses and the mind for a thousand years—that is Puranic hyperbole. At the end of it all Yayati said: '*Nā jātu kāmāḥ kāmānāmupabhogena śāmyati; Haviṣā kṛṣṇavartmeva bhūya evābhivardhate*'. Never can desire be quenched by enjoying its objects. Like fire fed with ghee it only flames up all the more!⁶ No statement on desire could be more authentic, because Yayāti *knew*.

Our real, divine nature alone is the repository of lasting bliss. Rightly does the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* say: '*Yo vai bhūma tatsukharī nālpe sukhāsti bhūmaiva sukharī bhūmā toeva vijijñāsita vyaḥ*'. That which is Infinite, is alone bliss. There is no bliss in the finite. The Infinite alone is bliss. One should desire to know That alone.⁷ And the Infinite refers to our real nature, the Atman, *Sat-cit-ānanda*.

The Bondage between the First Three and the Last Two Factors

To resume our discussion on the five factors. What is responsible for the outward going tendency of the mind? The connection between the first three factors (pertaining to Brahman) and the last two factors, name and form. The last two have their own strong mu-

tual interconnection: every name is associated with a form, and conversely, every form has a name or a word to describe it.

It needs to be noted that our world of names and forms includes our body and mind too. Our body and mind are very real to us. An average human life for the most part is governed by the mind with its desires, prejudices, attachments, hatred—and their counterparts—and the sense organs (body) pulled by their sense objects. As long as name and form or the body-mind complex holds sway over us and determines our life's priorities, we need to be contented with our vain search in finite things for lasting bliss, peace and fulfilment.

But that is what *maya* does: making us look for something lasting in things finite. With its power of concealment (*āvaraṇa śakti*) it makes us blind to the spiritual reality within us; and with its power of distortion (*vikṣepa śakti*) it makes the spiritual reality appear as the world with its names and forms. In short, *maya* makes us blind to the first three factors and fastens us to the last two. Sri Ramakrishna illustrates this with a forceful example: 'The grain-dealer stores rice in huge bags in his warehouse. Near them he puts some puffed rice in a tray. This is to keep the rats away. The puffed rice tastes sweet to the rats and they nibble at it all night; they do not seek the rice itself. But just think! One seer of rice yields fourteen seers of puffed rice. How infinitely superior is the joy of God to the pleasure of [the senses]!'⁸

How Did this Bondage Come about?

If the Atman is the storehouse of eternal Bliss, how did this attachment to name and form—to the world—come into being? That's a good question but not logical, Swami Vivekananda would reply. The Atman is beyond name and form, and transcends time, space and causation, their threefold domain. The question is being asked from within the domain of time-space-causation about something that transcends them, and hence illogi-

cal. But is there a way out of this bondage? Yes, that is what spiritual disciplines are about.

Need to Awaken the *Buddhi*

The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* continues: 'But a person endowed with discrimination, wishing for immortality, behold the inner Self with his eyes closed [by turning the senses away from their objects].'⁹ The word used is *dhīra*, meaning *viveki*, a man of discrimination. The first step in breaking the bond is disciplining the sensory system, turning them away from sense objects.

Elsewhere the same *Upaniṣad* explains the human personality with an allegory. It compares the human system to a chariot. According to the allegory, our Self = master of the chariot, body = chariot, *buddhi* = charioteer, mind = reins, sense organs = horses, sense object = road. When the horses are not disciplined and the charioteer is asleep, the chariot does not reach its destination. It moves in a direction determined by the most powerful among the horses. The chariot could even overturn in a ditch, spelling death for the master! On the other hand, if the horses are broken and the charioteer is wide awake and intelligent, the chariot reaches its destination, where the master wants to go. The destination is spoken of as *viṣṇoḥ paramaṁ padam*, the Supreme Abode of the all-pervading Reality.¹⁰

The allegory holds an important lesson: the end of the journey—the goal of life—can be reached only with an awakened charioteer, awakened *buddhi*. And *buddhi* is the discriminative and decision-making faculty. It is *buddhi* that disciplines the wayward mind. And *buddhi* is the most proximate to the Atman, the master of the chariot. The more the *buddhi* is exercised, the stronger and purer it becomes. When Sri Krishna asked Arjuna to raise himself by himself (*Uddharedātmanāt-mānam*),¹¹ this is what He meant: discipline the wayward mind with *buddhi*.

Thus, disciplining the mind and the sensory system is the first step towards breaking

the bond between the first three and the last two factors. Again sense control was an important teaching of Sri Krishna to Arjuna: 'Therefore control your senses at the outset and kill [desires] this foul destroyer of knowledge and realization.' (3.41)

Giving a Different Turn to the Mind

We saw earlier that our senses are created outward-looking and that every sense is ever eager to come in contact with its sense object. Breaking the link between them and giving an inward turn to the senses and the mind is perhaps the greatest challenge in human life. In the words of Sri Shankaracharya, it is as difficult and formidable as turning back the downward course of a swift river.¹² Yet, only human beings can take up the challenge, think of the indwelling God, practise spiritual disciplines, and realize their divine nature.

Sri Ramakrishna's explains how to give a different turn to the propensity of the sense organs:

So long as these passions [like lust and anger] are directed towards the world and its objects, they behave like enemies. But when they are directed towards God, they become the best friends of man, for then they lead him unto God. The lust for the things of the world must be changed into the hankering for God, the anger that man feels in relation to his fellow man should be turned towards God for not revealing Himself to him. One should deal with all the passions in the same manner. These passions cannot be eradicated but can be educated.¹³

Breaking the Bond: Some Practical Steps

Worship of a Personal God: Here is the importance of worshipping a Personal God, either with form and attributes or with attributes but without form. To be freed from attachment to the worldly forms the senses are after, a spiritual aspirant tries to cultivate love for a divine form—Rama, Krishna, Shiva, Kali, Buddha, Christ, and so on. He repeats the divine name—which stands for the divine form—and thinks of the divine attributes as-

sociated with the form, such as infinite purity, infinite strength, infinite power, infinite knowledge and infinite bliss. Such a discipline in the long run weans the aspirant's mind from ephemeral forms of the world. The more the attachment to God, the less the attachment to the world. That underlines another uncomfortable but important principle: attachment to both God and the world—yoga and *bhoga* (enjoyment)—cannot coexist.

Prayer: Sri Ramakrishna instructed aspirants to pray to God for freedom from the hold of the sense objects, from the snares of the world-bewitching maya, and for devotion to His holy feet. Besides prayer and discrimination he emphasized a firm resolve by the aspirant not to repeat his old mistakes, and to turn a new leaf.

Japa: Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi emphasized *japa* (repetition of the divine name) among spiritual disciplines, though she said God's grace is necessary for realization: 'Do you know the significance of Japa and other spiritual practices? By these, the power of the sense-organs is subdued.'¹⁴

Positive, wholesome thoughts, thoughts about the Atman: Swami Vivekananda never tired of emphasizing the divine nature of man. He would encourage people to dwell on the power and purity of the Atman than harping on weakness and sin. Calling a man a sinner, he considered a sin and a standing libel on human nature.¹⁵ He would further say: 'Teach yourselves, teach everyone his real nature, call upon the sleeping soul and see how it awakes. Power will come, glory will come, goodness will come, purity will come, and everything that is excellent will come when this sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity.' (3.193)

Swamiji considered weakness as the only sin—to say that one is weak, and others are weak (2.308). According to him, strengthening thoughts, thoughts about the Atman and Its glory, are the remedy for weakness—not dwelling on sin: 'The only remedy for bad

habits is counter habits; all the bad habits that have left their impressions are to be controlled by good habits. Go on doing good, thinking holy thoughts continuously; that is the only way to suppress base impressions. ... Character is repeated habits, and repeated habits alone can reform character.' (1.208)

Selfless service: Yet another potent means to discipline one's mind is to work without attachment. This is an important teaching of the *Bhagavadgītā*: offering the fruits of actions to God and thus working without attachment. One's daily activities can be converted into a tool to discipline the mind, if they can be performed with one's whole mind, doing them as worship. According to Swamiji, 'Every duty is holy, and devotion to duty is the highest form of the worship of God; it is certainly a source of great help in enlightening and emancipating the deluded and ignorance-encumbered souls of the ... bound ones.' (5.240)

Swamiji's words are a great help when we get an opportunity to serve others: 'We are all debtors to the world and the world does not owe us anything. It is a great privilege for all of us to be allowed to do anything for the world. In helping the world we really help ourselves.... The world is a grand moral gymnasium wherein we have all to take exercise so as to become stronger and stronger spiritually.' (1.80)

* * *

To summarize. Five factors constitute the world around us—including our body and mind. The first three pertain to the underlying Divinity (Brahman or Atman) and the last two are name and form. Minus name and form, nothing exists in the world except Divinity. That divine substratum alone is real; names and forms are fleeting and have only a secondary order of reality. Suppose we compare the water in an ocean to Divinity, and the waves

and bubbles to name and form, the reality or otherwise of the waves and bubbles in relation to the water stands revealed easily. If someone asked us to fetch waves and bubbles from the ocean, all that we would be able to bring is just water.

To break the bond between the first three factors and the last two is what spiritual struggle is about. Mind discipline or sense control is the first step in this struggle. Prayer, worship, *japa*, selfless work and wholesome thoughts about our divine nature are some potent means to accomplish this. *

References

1. *Asti bhāti priyaṁ rupam nāma cetyaṁśapañcakam; Ādyatrayaṁ brahmarūpaṁ jagadrūpaṁ tato dvayam.* —*Ḍṛg-ḍṛśya-viveka*, 20.
2. *Ayamātmā brahma.* —*Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, 2.
3. *Mahābhārata*, 'Vanaparva', 313.116.
4. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 2.1.1.
5. Swami Ashokananda, *Ascent to Spiritual Illumination* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 2001), p. 47.
6. *Bhāgavata*, 9.19.14.
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Prabuddha Bharata—100 Years Ago



July 1902

IN MEMORIAM: SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Our beloved Swamiji entered *Maha Samadhi* on Friday night, the 4th of July, at the Math, Belur. On that morning, he meditated for more than two hours. During the day, he held a class on Panini Grammar for about three hours, and remarked how much better he was feeling. In the afternoon he took a short walk. In the evening, he went to his own room; a Brahmacharin was in attendance. He took his beads and did *japam* and directed the Brahmacharin to sit outside and do likewise. About 45 minutes later he called the Brahmacharin in, asked him to fan his head and then went to sleep. At about nine, he gave a sudden start and then drew two long breaths. The Brahmacharin, unable to understand what the matter was, immediately called an aged Sannyasin, who, on coming, felt for his pulse but found it stopped.

At first, it was taken to be a *Samadhi* and a brother repeated the name of the Master in his ear. Seeing no sign of return of life however, a doctor was called in, who tried to induce breath artificially, but without success. The next day, Swamiji's body was cremated under a Bel tree on the Ganges, in the Math grounds.

—Prabuddha Bharata

God sends His teachers unto every age,
To every clime, and to every race of men,
With revelations fitted to their growth,
And shape of mind, nor gives the realm of Truth,
Into the selfish rule of one sole race:
Therefore, each form of worship that hath swayed
The life of man, and given it to grasp
The master-key of knowledge—reverence—
Infolds some germs of goodness and of right.
(James Russell Lowell)

By the death of Swami Vivekananda, we have lost a dear friend, and suffered an irreparable loss. He is best remembered by us, as having been 'the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions' held at Chicago in 1893, where he addressed crowded audiences, the quality of his teaching and his unaffected eloquence winning a most sympathetic hearing. He had a vivid, eager personality, singularly magnetic, persuasive and enthusiastic. He was no mere visionary anchorite of the Himalayas, giving out the truths of Indian philosophy. On the contrary, he was a man born with perfectly developed spiritual sense, discerning spiritual truths without effort: calm and steadfast, giving forth power from the spiritual centre within, and living for the advancement of his race: a true lover of his fellow-men, devoting his energies in trying to rouse them to their true selves, content to use up his gifts and talents for their benefit. Clad in his habit of red or ochre, did this Indian Sannyasin standing upon all sorts of platforms, in all manner of places, with a strong beautiful voice expound the philosophy of Vedanta. Again and again in his lectures did he recur to the central idea of Advaita, the One in everything, the potential divinity in all. Gifted with an original out-look upon life, he displayed

that fervour and vigour that one associated with monks, who have for centuries held to their spirituality with a power and staunchness unrivalled in worldly affairs.

He was widely travelled: he preached Vedanta from New York to Chicago: from Boston to California. Flitting through London, Paris and other cities, he passed through the vain show, as if unconscious of it, except [pausing] occasionally to hurl at his listeners a vehement denunciation of the frivolity, and lack of spirituality of the times. Speaking of India to Western people, his voice would drop, a wonderful smile would overspread his countenance, as he lovingly related the manners, customs, and characteristics of his beloved country-men and women. What charming Indian legends and tales he could tell, delighting and entralling the hearts of his hearers, betraying the sympathy and yearning he felt for his race, feeling the pulsation of their hidden life, touching so tenderly on their little idiosyncrasies of temperament and custom.

He has gone from amongst us, he who was instinct with so much inspiration, and who had in him so much of the seer of these latter days. His teachings have become an abiding possession with us, and a strength for ever-more. Truly can we say with Carlyle—

‘We have seen gleams in the face and eyes of the man that have let you look into a higher country.’

The Swami had but scant sympathy with iconoclasts, for as he wisely remarked, ‘The true philosopher strives to destroy nothing, but to help all.’

I shall close this humble but heartfelt tribute as I opened it with some more lines from Lowell, the sentiments therein expressed so aptly applying to the tender-hearted character of our late revered teacher.

As he foresaw how all things false should crumble
Before the free, uplifted soul of man:
And when he was made full to over-flowing
With all the loveliness of heaven and earth
Out rushed his song, like molten iron glowing
To show God sitting by the humblest hearth.
With calmest courage he was ever ready
To teach that action was the truth of thought,
And, with strong arm and purpose firm and steady,
An anchor for the drifting world he wrought.
So dis he make the meanest man partaker
Of all his brother-gods unto him gave.

—*A Western Disciple*

As we go to press we receive the distressing news that Swami Vivekananda is no more. Ramakrishna ... had a great affection for the young man who came to be afterwards known as Swami Vivekananda. The saint early saw the potentialities of the ingenuous youth, and his anticipations were realised. Vivekananda more quickly assimilated and was more deeply inspired by the teaching of the seer whom he accepted as master and exemplar, than almost anybody else. He gave formal and systematic expression to that teaching in Bengalee and English and propagated it far and wide. His work was done. Loved of the gods he died early, but his was a crowded hour of glorious life. Released from the turmoil of this world, let him rest in the blessed company of his master and inspire the fellow-workers he leaves behind.

—*The Indian Nation, Calcutta, July 7*

It is with great regret that we announce the death of Swami Vivekananda. The news everywhere will be received with feelings of deep regret and sorrow. In him we have lost not only one of the most popular Vedantists, but a patriot whose heart was full of love for Mother India. Earnest and sincere, always trying to live the life of a practical Vedantist, full of noble emotions and thoughts, for the regeneration of the mother country, his life has been cut short in the very prime of manhood amidst the great sorrow of the community at large. When we last saw him in Calcutta, he was eloquently talking, in pure and chaste Hindi, which would do credit to any Upper Indian, about his schemes for the regeneration of India, his face beaming with enthusiasm. Who then thought that the end of the great man who has raised Hindu philosophy so much in the eyes of the West, who could count hundreds of Europeans and Americans as his disciples and who had by standing temptations in the West showed of what good stuff he was made, was coming so soon? The swami had been ailing since some years past; dyspepsia and diabetes, the two cursed diseases that have claimed such a large number of our countrymen, attacked him three years ago. All what human ingenuity could do was done.

—*The Advocate, Lucknow, July 10*

On Friday last, as already announced, was gathered to the shades of the Gurus the English educated young Indian monk and preacher of philosophic Hinduism, who by sheer force of individuality rose by one leap from obscurity to renown, and whose genius secured to the much maligned faith of his fathers a high place in the estimation of thoughtful people in the West. ... Swami Vivekananda was a truly remarkable man, a man of wonderful powers of persuasion and strength of will, who, with a larger experience of life and a deeper initiation into the realm of spirituality, might have worked wonders in the way of rousing his countrymen from their comatose condition in matters religious and social if his life had been spared. It is indeed a case of a most promising career cut short, of the spark of life burning out before it reached its fulfilment. What the Swami, however, achieved during his short term of public life was no small thing. He it was who more than any other scholar or preacher contributed to establish[ing] the claim of philosophic Hinduism to respectful attention and careful study among the people of the West by standing forth in their midst as a concrete and brilliant example of the culture produced by it. In his own country his genius, besides giving form and shape to the cult which deifies his revered Guru, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, as the last of the Incarnations, has brought into being a movement of practical benevolence which reminds one of the monks of old who went about preaching and practising the gospel of service to humanity. The Ramakrishna Mission is now a well-organised institution in the country whose members are seen working quietly in famine tracts or plague-infected areas, bringing relief to the needy and succour to the distressed according to their humble means. The monasteries established by Swamiji at Belur, Mayavati, and other places are centres for the cultivation, by educated men who have renounced the world, of the practical religion preached by their Master, of service to humanity and devotion (*bhakti*) to the Lord through the Guru. It was Vivekananda's genius that gave shape to this new school of monks in modern times, though perhaps the force of his revered master's spirit was behind. Ramakrishna was remarkable for his sayings, which have now passed into current proverbs in the Bengali language: Vivekananda was great in action and organising capacity. ... Vivekananda was a remarkable personality and a heroic character the best of whose aspirations and energies were devoted not to the aggrandisement of self, but to the uplifting of his fallen countrymen. He was a little over 39 at death.

—*The Tribune, Lahore, July 10*

All the different Provinces of India equally mourn the irreparable loss the country has suffered by the sudden and untimely death of Swami Vivekananda. The Madras Presidency, where the late Swami was most popular and where one comes across Vivekananda Societies and Vivekananda Town Halls, naturally mourns the most. Public meetings are being held all over the Presidency to mourn the sad event which the Madrasis consider as a national calamity, and it is remarkable that even the Mahomedans and Christians are coming forward with words of sympathy and sorrow.

Notes of grief are pouring in from almost all parts of the Presidency in prose and verse. The following is from Trichinopoly:

Immortal son of Ind! Thy land today,
From snowy peaks of Northern Him to low
Red strand of Comorin, with grief is low;
And loud with wail resounds from sea to bay.
Now Ind alone thy early loss thus bewail;
Climes far off where thine words did spread the light
Of Love and Faith and Truth and changed to bright
The minds in which did doubt and shadow prevail.

The Cocanada Literary Association at a special urgent meeting recorded its deep regret for the sudden death of Swami Vivekananda and feels it a national calamity.

—*The Tribune, Lahore, July 15*

SELF-ASSERTION AND SELF-RESIGNATION

The root of the soul's ignorance is also the Lord. He makes and He alone unmakes it. When the ignorance is made to cease by Him, then the selfishness of the soul ceases; he finds that he, the lower self, was not and the Lord, his higher Self, was all. This is the highest spiritual realization. The realization comes only through the Lord. The struggle of the soul is of no avail, apart from the will of the Lord. Such a God may seem to man the worst diabolical tyrant. He may love or hate Him, but the fact is there all the same. Still the soul struggles and has to struggle like the drowning child. The child cannot be saved unless a helping hand comes. Like unto that, the soul that has got intense desire for realization struggles, though his struggle is of no use unless the helping hand of the Lord is there. Amidst these struggles even, what is left for the soul is to be resigned unto the Lord's will. No hard and fast rules can be laid down as conditions for gaining His grace. He is beyond rules and conditions. Prayers may move Him or may not. The most earnest soul may struggle his whole life, yet gain nothing; one who has never cared to think of God or religion, may turn a saint, in an instant, if He wills. But once the Lord is there, the vast mass of ignorance vanishes at once.

This is self-resignation; the other is Self-assertion.

Whatever the difference in the conception of the two theories, the result is the same, as far as the individual soul is concerned. By Self-assertion, the soul denies his 'little me' and, in its place, asserts and builds up his higher Self, the Absolute. By self-resignation, he resigns his little self to the will of the Lord, that is, denies his 'little me' and replaces it by his higher self, the Lord. Let the ideal be the Absolute or the Lord, the destruction of the 'little me' is the common point and is the one and the only thing demanded of a spiritual aspirant.

—*Swami Swarupananda*

Vivekananda: Conqueror of Death!

LINDA PRUGH

Part II: On the Wings of Meditation!

Friday, 4 July 1902

There are many records by monks who were present at Belur Math on 4 July, or who came there shortly after. A combining of sources has been used to compile a chronological and detailed account of Swami Vivekananda's final day and evening. Beginning this account with a letter Swami Premananda wrote to Swami Abhedananda, picking it back up from time to time, and relying heavily on the fourth volume of the first edition of *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* by his Eastern and Western disciples, the following also includes information here and there from other sources, as noted.

'If There Were Another Vivekananda'

Swami Premananda opened his letter to Swami Abhedananda on 20 August 1902, with the sad words:

We are now in a state of living death, so to say. That energy, that inspired leadership, those liberal discourses, are no more. He recovered quite well under Ayurvedic treatment, he was almost free from all troubles. He gave up his body just at his will.

For about two months he had been regularly teaching all the boys meditation and devotional songs in which he himself would join. For some time I had been observing that his spirit of renunciation had become very intense.

He would ask, 'Which are the two songs that the Master liked to hear during the last days?' So saying, he would sing, 'Oh Mother, Enchantress of the Creator, you have charmed the universe' and 'When shall I dive into sam-

adhi at the feet of Shyama?' You know, he never lacked in urge for work. Only 10-15 days earlier he had sent Tarak Dada [Shivananda] to Kashi [Varanasi] for opening the [Ramakrishna Advaita] Ashrama. ...

Sharat and Rakhal were in Calcutta for a few days on some business. Among the old timers, Gopal-Dada [Advaitananda] and myself were in the Math that day. He [Swamiji] had no disease at all, you understand!

That day after rising in the morning he had plenty of fun, laughter and jokes with me as usual. He took hot milk and fruits as usual and expressed great earnestness to feed me. Thereafter, for the first time this year, a Hilsa fish ... was bought and he cut a good deal of jokes ... over the price of the fish. To a boy from East Bengal who was there, he said: 'I am told you worship the first Hilsa fish of the year. Worship this fish with due rites.' ...

At about 8:30 am he went up to the Chapel [now Old Shrine] for meditation. I went to the Chapel at about 9:30 for performing worship of the Deity. On having seen me he said, 'Put my seat in the bedroom of the Deity [the Master] and shut all the doors.' On other days, even when I would perform worship, he would sit in one corner and meditate. That day he did otherwise. After about 11:00 am he rose, tidied the bed of the Deity, and hummed the song:¹

Is Kali, my Mother really dark?
The Naked One, though black She seems,
Lights the Lotus of the heart.
Men call Her black, but yet my mind
Does not believe that She is so:
Now She is white, now red, now blue;
Now She appears as yellow, too.

I hardly know who Mother is,
Though I have pondered all my life:
Now Purusha, now Prakriti,
And now the Void, She seems to be.
To meditate on all these things
Confounds poor Kamalakanta's wits.²

Descending the stairs of the shrine, Swamiji in an indrawn mood paced back and forth in the courtyard. Then he was heard to say, almost in a whisper, but loud enough for Swami Premananda to hear him: 'If there were another Vivekananda, then he would have understood what this Vivekananda has done! And yet—how many Vivekanandas shall be born in time!'³

Swamiji then expressed a wish that Mother Kali be worshipped at the Math the following day. It would be a Saturday, an auspicious day for Her worship. Ramakrishnananda's father, Ishwar Chandra Chakrabarty, a devout worshipper of the Mother, arrived at the Math, and Swamiji told him of his intention. Shuddhananda and Bodhananda were asked to procure all necessary articles for the worship. (see p. 70)

'Make Original Reflections'

Swamiji then asked Shuddhananda to bring a copy of the *Shukla Yajurveda* from the Math library. When it was brought, Swamiji asked him to read the mantra beginning with the words *Sushumnah suryarashmi*, with Mahidhara's commentary on it (*Vajasaneyi Samhita*, 18.40). Swamiji then remarked: 'This interpretation of the passage does not appeal to my mind. Whatever may be the commentator's interpretation of the word "*sushumna*", the seed or the basis of what the Tantras, in later ages, speak of as the *sushumna* nerve channel in the body, is contained here in this Vedic mantra. You, my disciples, should try to discover the true import of these mantras and make original reflections and commentaries on the scriptures.' (pp. 70-1)

The *Life* states about this:

The purport of Mahidhara's commentary may

be put thus: 'That Moon, who is of the form of *gandharva* (a demi-god), who is *sushumna*, that is, giver of supreme happiness to those who perform sacrifices, and whose rays are like the rays of the Sun—may that Moon protect us brahmins and kshatriyas! We offer our oblations to Him! His (Moon's) *apsaras* (nymphs) are the stars who illuminate all things—we offer our oblations to them.' From his reading into the meaning of the mantra, and from his desire of performing the Kali Puja, it seems that on this day the idea of the *shatchakra* and its sadhana was especially present in his mind. The *shat-chakra* sadhana consists in awakening the six dormant lotus centres in the body by means of concentrated meditation, along the lines indicated by the Yogis and the Tantrics, the consummation being reached in the realization of the union or the oneness of the Jivatman and the Paramatman in the *sahasrara*, or the thousand-petalled lotus in the crown of the head, and the soul of man merged in the infinite bliss bursts the bonds of the body forever.⁴

Because of his poor health, Swamiji had lately been taking his meals in his room. But on this day he sat with the other monks for the noon meal. Swami Premananda's letter continues: 'He took his lunch with great relish with that Hilsa fish in the forms of curry, pickle and fry. He said afterwards: "My appetite has been very much sharpened by [the] fast of Ekadashi. With difficulty I resisted the temptation to eat up the utensils."⁵ Since they were eating fish, Swamiji also joked with a brother-disciple, saying: 'Fish need water to swim. Please give me a glass of water.'⁶

'The Spiritual Impact of Belur'

Swami Premananda's letter continues: 'After lunch he talked of many things and took a little rest. After 1:00 pm he awakened me and said: "Let us go for study. Sleeping in daytime is bad for sannyasins. I had no sleep today. A little meditation has caused me a slight headache. It seems that my brain has become weak." Then for three hours he taught Panini [Sanskrit grammar] in the library.'⁷ One who attended that class later recorded:

The class lasted for nearly three hours. ... But no monotony was felt. For he would tell a witty story, or make *bons mots* now and then to lighten his teaching, as he was wont to do. Sometimes the joke would be with reference to the wording of a certain aphorism, or he would make an amusing play upon its words, knowing that the fun would make it easier for recollection. ... he spoke of how he had coached his college friend Dasarathi Sanyal in English history in one night by following a similar process. He, however, appeared a little tired after the grammar class.

Swamiji wanted each disciple to be original and not follow him blindly. He said to them: 'If any man imitates me, kick him out. Do not imitate me.' He appeared a little tired after the grammar class. At 4:30 pm Swamiji drank some water and a cup of hot milk.⁸

According to Sister Nivedita, at half-past four that Friday afternoon, a special message from Swamiji reached brother monks in Calcutta saying that he had never felt so well.⁹

Swami Premananda's letter continues:

For some time he had had a strong desire to open a school of Vedic studies. Even on that last day three letters were sent to Poona and Bombay for some books on the Vedas. That day I had a long discussion with him regarding the school of Vedic studies. I asked, 'What will be the good of studying the Vedas?' He said, 'Superstitions will go.' ...

[At one point] he said to me: 'Why should you imitate me? The Master used to discourage imitation of others. Do not be a spend-thrift like me.' ...

After 4:00 pm, he went with me about a mile outside the garden [to Belur bazar]. ... [Passing a garden] he began to give a description of the garden of Mr Leggett. He described how in that country [America] a small number of men keep large gardens clean by means of machine[ry].¹⁰

During their walk that day Swamiji said to Premananda: 'The spiritual impact that has come here to Belur will last fifteen hundred years—and this will be a great university. Do not think I imagine it. I see it!'¹¹

The swamis returned to the Math about

5:30 pm.¹² Swamiji first inquired very tenderly about every member of the monastery. Then he spoke for a long time on the rise and fall of nations, remarking at one point: 'India is immortal if she persists in her search for God. But if she goes in for politics and social conflict, she will die.'¹³

Swami Premananda's letter continues: 'At dusk when I went to the Chapel, Swamiji had a long talk with the father of Sashi, after which he went to the lavatory. A boy from East Bengal named Brajendra was with him at that time. When he came out of the lavatory he said: "Today I am feeling very light. I am all right today."¹⁴

Swami Bodhananda, who was entrusted with taking care of Swamiji's money, later recalled about that day:

About 6:00 or 6:30, when we were having tea, he came to us and asked, 'Will you give me a cup of tea?' [When the vesper bell was rung at 7:00], he started up the stairs, [stopping on the second step]. I was standing by the stairway down on the ground floor. That was in the month of July, and in India the mosquitoes are so numerous and so dangerous that no one can sleep in bed without mosquito curtains. He [had] discovered that some of the monks' mosquito curtains were torn, and when the mosquitoes enter through the holes of the net you can never get them out. His last word or order to me was, 'See that they all get new mosquito curtains.'¹⁵

'Wait and Meditate till I Call You'

It was now a little past 7:00 pm. Premananda's letter to Abhedananda provides the final details of Swamiji's mahasamadhi:

[Swamiji] sat in his own room [facing east toward the Ganges] and said to Brajendra, 'Give me my rosary.' He asked [Brajendra] to go to another room, adding, 'Come when I call you.' About an hour later he called Brajendra and asked him to fan him and to massage his legs. He fell asleep when his legs were being massaged. After he had been in the state of sleep for half an hour his hand shook slightly for a few seconds. He then gave out a deep gasp through his mouth. About a minute or two later he again

gave out a deep gasp and went into samadhi. Brajendra thereupon called Gopalda [Advaitananda] out of fear and said, 'Please come and see what has happened.' One or two minutes after this I went and having found him in a state of samadhi I called the father of Shashi and began to repeat the name of the Master into [Swamiji's] ears hoping that the state of samadhi might pass off. Oh, how effulgent his face was! What a divine glow brightened his wide open eyes! An unusual gracefulness was observed in his beautiful body clad in *kaupin* only. Even on the following day many people were relieved of their sorrows and sufferings on having a glimpse of that face. It seemed [that] Lord Shiva Himself was lying there! There was no disfiguration of any of the limbs. It looked as though he had given up his body at his own will. Dr Majumdar was called in that very night. Sharat, Rakhal and Sanyal came. The doctor could not say definitely what disease had caused death! The Master used to say, 'You will give up your body the day you realize your Self.' That has come to pass!¹⁶

Swami Saradananda wrote to Swami Abhedananda:

After dusk he went to his room with his rosary and sat down for *japa* saying to his attendant [Brajendra], 'Go and meditate in another room till I call you.' After an hour he called the attendant and began to meditate in a lying posture. [Brajendra] sat near him and fanned him. After he had remained motionless, lying on his back for about an hour, his right hand began to shake slightly and drops of perspiration appeared on his forehead. This continued for about two minutes after which he gasped out a deep breath through his mouth. Then having remained motionless for two minutes he again gasped out another deep breath and with that his head shook and his eyes remained fixed on the middle point between the eyebrows and an unusual glow and smile appeared on his face. His body became still. It was 9:10 pm. ... [Then] all the inmates of the Math were called.¹⁷

The first edition of the *Life* quotes one monastic disciple's reminiscences:

The Mahasamadhi took place a few minutes after 9:00 pm. The supper bell had just been rung

when the inmates were called to see what had happened to Swamiji. Swamis Premananda and Nishchayananda began to chant aloud the name 'Ramakrishna', believing that he might be brought to consciousness thereby. But he lay there in his room on his back, motionless, and the course proved fruitless. Swami Advaitananda asked Swami Bodhananda to feel Swamiji's pulse. After doing this for a while, he stood up and cried aloud. Swami Advaitananda then told Nirbhayananda: 'Alas! What are you looking at! Hurry to Dr Mahendra Nath Mazumdar and bring him here as soon as you can.' Another monk also crossed the river and went to Calcutta to inform Swamis Brahmananda and Saradananda who were there that day, and bring them to the Math. They arrived at half past ten.

The doctor examined the swami thoroughly, found the life suspended, and tried to bring him back by asking someone to move both the hands in a semi-circle, backwards and forwards, to induce artificial respiration. At 12:00 midnight the doctor pronounced life extinct. Dr Mazumdar said that it might have been due to sudden heart failure. Dr Bipin Bihari Ghosh who came from Calcutta in the morning said that it was due to apoplexy. But none of the doctors who came afterwards and heard of the symptoms could agree. Whatever they might say, the monks of the Math have the unshakable conviction that the swami had voluntarily cast off the body in samadhi, when he did not want to remain any longer in the world, as predicted by Sri Ramakrishna.¹⁸

Still another version of that evening comes from a brother-disciple:

After conversation for some time, he went to his own room and told one of his disciples to bring him his rosary. Then asking the disciple to wait outside, he sat down to tell his beads and meditate in the room alone. He had thought of worshipping Kali the next day, which was a Saturday with Amavasya. He had talked much about doing this that day. (He did it mentally perhaps.)

After meditating and telling his beads for about an hour, he laid himself down on his bed on the floor, and calling that disciple who was waiting outside, told him to fan his head a little.

He had still the rosary in his hand. The disciple thought the swami was perhaps having a light sleep. About an hour later, his hand shook a little. Then came two deep breaths. The disciple thought he had fallen into samadhi. He then went downstairs and called a sannyasin, who came and found on examination that there was neither respiration nor beating of the pulse. Meanwhile another sannyasin came, and thinking him to be in samadhi, began to chant aloud Thakur's name continually, but in no way was the samadhi broken! That night an eminent physician was called in. He examined the body for a long time and afterwards said that life was extinct.' (4.81)

Another sannyasin later wrote: 'His last words to the brahmacharin who was attending him, before beginning the meditation in which he passed into samadhi leading into mahasamadhi, were, "Wait and meditate till I call you." As these were his last words on earth spoken to a monastic disciple, they might well be taken to be the Master's Final Commandment to all his monastic disciples.' (4.82)

Still another version reads:

After his mahasamadhi several doctors came and examined his body minutely and tried to bring him back to consciousness. They exhausted all the means and methods of rousing him which the storehouse of their knowledge could bring forth, but all was of no avail. They could not, in point of fact, make out the real cause of his death. He died, in truth, of his own accord. He was born a yogi and he died a yogi. (4.82)

Sister Nivedita later wrote in *The Master as I Saw Him*: 'The moment was come that had been foretold by his Master from the beginning. Half an hour went by, and then on the wings of that meditation, his spirit soared whence there could be no return, and the body was left, like a folded vesture, on the earth.'¹⁹

Saradananda and Brahmananda arrived at the Math and saw Swamiji. Brahmananda cried like a child over his body. When Saradananda lifted him up, Brahmananda said: 'It is as if the whole Himalayan Mountains have disappeared from before my eyes!'²⁰

That very night, more than 1000 miles away in Madras, Ramakrishnananda called out loudly to Swami Satchidananda: 'Dinabandhu! Dinabandhu! ... I saw Swamiji standing before me and he said to me, "Look here, Shashi, I threw away this body like spitting out spittle", and he spat twice or thrice.' Both swamis could not figure out the meaning of that vision, and neither of them got any more sleep that night. The next day Ramakrishnananda received a cable from Belur Math with the sad news of Vivekananda's passing away. The swamis cried for their beloved leader and later arranged for a big memorial meeting in Madras.²¹

Swami Vivekananda's death came at the age of thirty-nine years, five months, and twenty-four days, thus fulfilling the prophecy he had made to Josephine MacLeod the previous March, 'I shall never see forty.'

Saturday, 5 July

'The Living Presence of a Freed Soul!'

According to the *Life*:

The next morning it was found that the eyes were bloodshot and that there was a little bleeding through the mouth and nostrils. Other doctors remarked that it was due to a rupture of a blood-vessel in the brain. This, however, clearly leads to the conclusion that in the process of japa and meditation, his Brahmarandhra [opening at the top of the head through which life

breath passes], must have been pierced when he left the body, [causing blood to flow in the nostrils and mouth].²²

Sister Nivedita arrived at Belur Math in the morning, and sat fanning the swami until 2:00 when the body was moved from the swami's room.²³

When Girish Ghosh arrived at the Math, Swami Niranjanananda exclaimed, 'Naren is

gone.' Girish replied, 'Not gone but he [just] left the body!'²⁴ Girish was right. He was feeling the presence of the great Swamiji who once promised: 'It may be that I shall find it good to get outside my body—to cast it off like a worn out garment. But I shall not cease to work! I shall inspire men everywhere, until the whole world shall know that it is one with God!'²⁵

In the meantime, Swamiji's family, his mother, brothers and sister, were informed of his death. His brother Bhupendranath Datta later recorded:

[I] broke the sorrowful news to our mother and grandmother. Mother enquired what caused the sudden death. ... They were overpowered with grief and began to wail. A lady from the neighbourhood came to comfort them. ... Later on, I went to my sister's house, where my brother-in-law had already been informed [about it]. Both of us started for Belur Math. On arriving there, we found the sadhus of the Math and the late Atulchandra Ghose and Sister Nivedita to be there. Then I saw Mother coming with her eldest grandson, Brojomohan Ghose. She wept bitterly, and at last the sadhus sent her home and asked [me] to accompany her in order to keep her quiet, by scolding if necessary. But she was sent back with her grandson. Nivedita, weeping, bade her goodbye. Later, Nivedita asked Girishchandra Ghosh, 'Why did they drive away the mother?' It was explained to her [that it would be too painful for a mother to see her son on the funeral pyre].²⁶

All morning long, people from all parts of Calcutta poured into the monastery grounds. Carriage after carriage passed through the gate and boats filled to capacity came to the ghat. All arrived in silent sadness. The body lay in state in the swami's room, and hundreds passed by quietly, their eyes debating whether he was really dead. This monk they had loved more than their own lives. One young man, looking at the face of Swami Vivekananda on this day, vowed then and there to devote his life solely to the service of his country.²⁷

Vanquisher of Death!

At 2:00 pm Swamiji's body was taken down to the porch leading to the courtyard. *Arati* was performed, then the body was taken to the spot which he had previously pointed out for his cremation. The *Life* records:

Towards the afternoon the body was brought downstairs to the porch in front of the courtyard. There on a cot the body lay, wrapped in the poverty-symbolic robes of the sannyasin. The soles of his feet were painted over with *alta*, a kind of crimson pigment, and impressions were taken of them on muslin, to be preserved as a sacred memento. Then the arati service was performed, this being the last rite of worship to that form which had been the instrument for the revelation of the Highest Truth. Lights were waved; mantras were recited; conch-shells were blown, bells rung, and incense burned. All throughout, a Presence was felt of inspiring power and glory. At the end of the ceremony some bowed low, others fell prostrate on the ground in salutation, and those who were disciples, touched their heads to the feet of their Blessed Master's earthly form.

When the procession was forming itself, and the cot upon which the body rested was slowly lifted to the shoulders of the sannyasin Sons of Sri Ramakrishna, all present felt a great throbbing of life, in which sadness and ecstasy combined. Time after time arose the thrilling shouts of 'Jay Guru Maharajji Ki Jay', from the depths of the devotees' hearts.

... The body had been beautifully decorated with garlands and masses of flowers, and he appeared like a God who had attained immortality vanquishing Death with scorn. The procession moved slowly through the courtyard, across the spacious lawn, until it reached the bilva tree, standing in the southeastern corner of the grounds. There, slightly ahead and to the left, on the very spot where the swami himself had instructed to cremate his body, the funeral pyre had been built.

Finally, amidst wild sobs of grief and frantic exclamation of the names of the Master and His Chief Disciple, the body was placed upon the funeral pyre by the monks and disciples. Reeds were lighted, and with the monks scores of persons lighted the pyre. Slowly and steadily the

fire encircled the pyre, running along the logs of wood and into every crevice. Soon tongues of fire began to shoot up, snapping at first and then bursting forth here and there into wild and open flames. Then the whole pyre was ablaze. ... Slowly but surely a great Consciousness arose in the minds of all: 'No, this was not the man, the Swami Vivekananda, that was burning. That was the body only.' Deep in their hearts, scattering the gloom of the deepest sorrow, they felt the living presence of that freed soul clothed with light, and Peace stole softly into their souls, a peace strangely mixed with sadness, softening its intensity, calming its abandonment!²⁸

Swami Saradananda later wrote about this day to Swami Abhedananda: 'At 4:00 pm his body was cremated. Whoever saw that unusual expression on his face up to the last was charmed. It is proposed to build a temple at the site of cremation of his body. ... His body was cremated within the precincts of the Math on the western bank of the Ganges. The body of Guru Maharaj [Sri Ramakrishna] had been cremated just opposite to the place on the other bank of the river.'²⁹

Sister Nivedita sat beside the cremation pyre, and later wrote to Josephine MacLeod:

[As] we stood there, ... I said to Swami Saradananda, seeing a certain cloth covering the bed-top—'Is *this* going to be burnt? It is the last thing I ever saw Him wear!' Swami Saradananda offered it to me there, but I would not take it. Only I said, 'If I could only cut a corner of the border off for Yum [Josephine MacLeod]!' But I had neither knife nor scissors, and the seamliness of the act would have been doubtful—so I did nothing. At 6 o'clock ... as if I were twitched by the sleeve, I looked down, and there, safe out of that burning and blackness, there blew to my feet the very two or three inches I had desired out of the border of the cloth. I took it as a letter from Him to you, from beyond the grave.'³⁰

For many years, she [Josephine MacLeod] carried it in her handbag along with his [Swami's] most famous letter, written to her on 18 April 1900 from Alameda, California [quoted in Part I of this article], and Sister Nivedita's

original letter of 6 July 1902, in which she had written about receiving the cloth at the burning-pyre.³¹

Sacred Relics, Sacred Spot

When the flames had died out, monks poured Ganges water over the pyre, and at about 6:00 pm they carried the relics into the Chapel [Old Shrine].³² Thus, the swami's sacred relics were preserved as the greatest earthly treasure for themselves and future generations. In 1911, an altar was built, and upon it a marble likeness of the Master was placed. The cost of creating this alabaster sculpture was donated by Mrs Francis H Leggett of America. Sister Nivedita helped with arrangements for getting it sculpted.³³ The table of the altar stands on the very spot on which the body of the [great] swami rested in the flames. Some of the relics are kept here, and a copper receptacle near the altar of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna in the shrine contains the rest.³⁴ The permanent Vivekananda Temple was erected over this altar in 1923 and dedicated on 28 January 1924.

(to be concluded)

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The truths he preaches would have been as true ...

Like the Krishna of the *Gita*, like Buddha, like Shankaracharya, like every great teacher that Indian thought has known, [Swami Vivekananda's] sentences are laden with quotations from the Vedas and Upanishads. He stands merely as the Revealer, the Interpreter to India of the treasures that she herself possesses in herself. The truths he preaches would have been as true, had he never been born. Nay more, they would have been equally authentic. The difference would have lain in their difficulty of access, in their want of modern clearness and incisiveness of statement, and in their loss of mutual coherence and unity. Had he not lived, texts that today will carry the bread of life to thousands might have remained the obscure disputes of scholars. He taught with authority, and not as one of the Pandits. For he himself had plunged to the depths of the realisation which he preached, and he came back like Ramanuja only to tell its secrets to the pariah, the outcast, and the foreigner.

—Sister Nivedita, *Introduction to the Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*

Realization of Truth and Work Excellence

SWAMI NITYASTHANANDA

The field of Reality and the field of work seem to be completely different. One is transcendental and the other empirical, one is *being* and the other *becoming*. The *Munḍaka Upaniṣad* says: ‘*Nāstyakṛtaḥ kṛtena*, Being cannot be attained by becoming.’¹ Is it possible to attain the state of inaction while engaged in activity? Has the attainment of being any impact on becoming? Is there any concordance between these two states? Let us try to examine these issues.

Knowledge and Action

There are two very important aspects of life: knowing and acting. Generally, knowing precedes action; it is knowledge of something that prompts us to act. When we see or hear something and know about it, we either try to get it, get rid of it or remain indifferent towards it in accordance with our disposition towards such knowledge. During deep sleep, there is no knowledge of things and accordingly there is no action either. So knowing and action always go together, and they are an inseparable part of life.

But is there really any difference between knowledge and action? Knowledge cannot be separated from action. To know is to act, because knowledge involves innumerable physical and mental activities that stand revealed by closer observation. External objects and events stimulate the senses, and these stimuli are carried to the brain centres where they are in turn processed, forming different concepts in the mind, with the help of previous memories stored in the brain. The mind can form concepts without the help of external stimuli. And what we call knowledge is nothing but this process of conceptualization. So knowledge involves action.

And it is also true that we cannot act without knowledge. To do something we must have some knowledge of it and that knowledge is the result of action. So knowledge and action cannot be separated; they are one and the same. Since this is so, the process of living cannot be separated from the process of knowing. So ‘to live is to know’,² as Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela put it. ‘The interactions of a living system with its environment are cognitive reactions and the process of living itself is a process of cognition.’³ Since knowledge is a process, there must be an unmoving substratum to which knowledge is revealed. Since a process cannot recognize itself, there must be something beyond the process to do that. It is something like seeing the current of the river standing on its bank. Who is seeing all this process of knowing and action? Sri Shankaracharya says:

*Asti kaścitsvayam nityam
ahampratyayalambanaḥ;
Avasthātrayasāksi san-
pañcakośavilakṣaṇaḥ.*

There is something self-existent, a support of I-consciousness, which is the witness of three states—waking, dream and deep sleep—and beyond the five sheaths of personality.⁴

Being and Becoming

This takes us to another important aspect called *being*. This being is the ultimate reality, the divinity latent in us, and the real witness of all processes. Everything else is *becoming*. When we talk about the realization of divinity, we refer to this being. That is to say, we have to realize that we are beyond the process, beyond knowing and acting. In other words, beyond becoming.

Why do we try to go beyond becoming?

Why should we not remain satisfied with becoming? Seeking something beyond seems to be a constitutional necessity of a human being. In the words of Swami Vivekananda, 'No man is ever satisfied. That is the cause of misery, but it is also the cause of all blessings. That is the sure sign. How can you be satisfied with this world? ... If tomorrow this world becomes heaven, we will say, "Take this away. Give us something else."' ⁵ Huston Smith says: 'Whether we realize it or not, simply to be human is to long for release from mundane existence, with its confining walls of finitude and mortality.' ⁶ He further says:

Having been created in the image of God, all human beings have a God-shaped vacuum built into their heart [*daharākāśa*]. Since nature abhors vacuum, people keep trying to fill the one inside them. Searching for an image of the divine that will fit, they paw over various options as if they were pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, matching them successively with the gaping hole at the puzzle's centre. They keep doing this until the right piece is found. When it slips into place, life's jigsaw puzzle is solved. ⁷

Realization, and Excellence in Action

Now the question is how can this realization be related to excellence in one's field of activity, which is the realm of becoming. Is it possible to be good in the field of *becoming* by just *being*?

In fact, real excellence consists only in *being*, since that is the highest state of existence. In the state of becoming we can find various degrees of excellence and perfection depending upon the nature of the work and the individual's capacity. The enhancement of excellence can be effected by the increase of capacity, physical or mental, as the case may be. But in *being* there are no degrees of excellence, because being itself is excellence. It is the highest expression of power, joy and knowledge because it is the source of all these. Swami Ashokananda says: 'Understand the hierarchy and evolution of power: lowest is the power to achieve; middling, the power to re-

sist; highest, the power simply to *be*.' ⁸ That is why Swamiji says: 'Power will come, glory will come, goodness will come, purity will come, and everything that is excellent will come when this sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity.' ⁹ That means, the realization of potential divinity will be accompanied by the above qualities, inseparable as they are from the Divine.

Labour and Leisure

Now, the question is whether this divine excellence will make one excel in one's field of mundane activity. We get an affirmative answer in Swamiji's statement: 'If the fisherman thinks that he is the Spirit, he will be a better fisherman; if the student thinks he is the Spirit, he will be a better student. If the lawyer thinks that he is the Spirit, he will be a better lawyer, and so on.' ¹⁰ Let us think of a fisherman who already excels in his job. What happens to him if he thinks that he is the Self? He will become a better fisherman, not in the sense that he will catch more fish and make more money, but that in addition to his work excellence, he will have some other excellence—character excellence—a combination of both of which will make him a better fisherman.

The divine knowledge of Advaita may not help the fisherman become prosperous in his business. That is why Sri Ramakrishna said, 'With the divine knowledge of Advaita [tied to the hem of your cloth], do whatever you wish; for then no evil can ever come out of you.' ¹¹ But it might serve as a background. Then every work is divinized. Nay, life itself is divinized. Then the person will not take a false step, though he may err in his field of activity—which is natural—but not with regard to morality and spirituality. In the words of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*: 'Etamu haivaite na tapata iti—ataḥ pāpamakaravamiti, ataḥ kalyāṇamakaravamiti. ... Nainam kṛtākṛte tapataḥ. For the sake of this I committed this sin and for the sake of that I performed this meritorious act—these will not afflict him' (4.4.22). ¹² This

is character excellence, which will glorify work excellence.

With a spiritual orientation, one becomes capable of doing the work with a spirit of detachment. Then work ceases to be drudgery, not forcing the worker to seek joy and happiness outside the field of his activity.

Further, the spiritual orientation obliterates the difference between labour and leisure. Then one finds joy of leisure in labour, and creativity of labour in leisure, thus glorifying both.

In fact, all glory belongs to Him. Everything that is excellent in this world is His manifestation.¹³ So Swamiji says: 'This infinite Power of the Spirit, brought to bear upon matter evolves material development, made to act upon thought evolves intellectuality, and made to act upon itself makes of man a God.'¹⁴

Work as a Cosmic Sacrifice

Hence though divine excellence and excellence in one's field of activity apparently seem to belong to two different realms, they are really manifestations of one and the same divine Source, since everything that is glorious in this world belongs to Him. In fact God is the source of everything—whether glorious or not glorious—since there is nothing apart from Him. So every work belongs to Him, and is a part of the cosmic sacrifice that is going on incessantly throughout the universe. From the movement of subatomic particles and breathing of animals to the movement of stars and galaxies, all activities are part of this cosmic sacrifice. So no work belongs to us. Just as each part of the body works for the sake of the whole body and not for itself, so all our work belongs to the whole universe, whether we know it or not.

Sri Krishna says in the *Bhagavadgītā*: 'Bhujate te tvagham pāpā ye pacantyātma-kāraṇāt, Those sinful ones who cook food only for themselves, eat but sin.'¹⁵ This is applicable to every work, not just cooking. The idea is, our work is not ours. It belong to the cosmic

whole. Because of our ego, we try to appropriate to ourselves the work that Prakriti does through our body and mind, thus increasing our burden. Sri Ramana Maharshi used to illustrate this with the following example: A man was travelling in a train keeping his luggage on the floor. After a while he kept his luggage on his lap to reduce the train's burden, since it was carrying him along with the luggage! Similarly, we also increase our burden by appropriating to ourselves the work of Prakriti. When we realize our true nature as Pure Being, our action becomes inaction.¹⁶ As Ashtavakra put it :

*Nivṛttirapi mūḍhasya pravṛttirupajāyate;
Pravṛttirapi dhīrasya nivṛttiphalabhāginī.*

For a deluded one even inaction becomes action, and for a wise man even action gives the tranquillity of inaction.¹⁷

Spiritual realization thus helps one to act without really acting. *

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Need for Value-based Education in the 21st Century

BIKAS C SANYAL

Early Days of Value Education

In ancient India the instructions of a teacher to a student began thus: 'Let your conduct be marked by right action, including study and teaching of the scriptures; by truthfulness in word, deed and thought; by self-denial and the practice of austerity; by poise and self-control; by performance of the everyday duties of life with a cheerful heart and in unattached mind. ... Deviate not from the path of good. Revere greatness.'¹

In Taxila, later in Nalanda, Fes, Rabat and al-Azhar, still later in Paris and Oxford, instructions emphasized moral values. This was because formal education, although available for a restricted few, was organized around religious institutions. Education was thought to be a cultural good for individual moral development and to have very little to do with economic well-being or material progress. Education had to provide principally the behaviour codes, as mentioned in the instructions above, an initiation into the value system and an understanding of the ultimate objective of life in terms of spirituality. The ultimate goal of the whole process of education was to unravel the 'truth', to manifest 'the perfection already in man', to combine knowledge with compassion, and efficiency with moral excellence.²

But individual 'moral excellence' ignored in practice the aspects of equity, justice and freedom. Discrimination and hierarchy were common practice. Each religion was preaching itself as the best without hesitating to condemn the others.

During the second half of the 19th century, dismayed by the fanaticism expressed by different religions, an Indian priest, Sri

Ramakrishna, took upon himself the task of proving to the world that all religions led to the same goal. He did so through the practise of Islam, Christianity and different sects of Hinduism.³ Inspired by him, another Indian monk, Swami Vivekananda, proclaimed at the Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago in 1893: 'Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence ... But their time is come; and I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honour of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions....'⁴

To realize this, he set up an organization, the Ramakrishna Mission, where universality of religion is not only believed in theory but practised in reality. All its educational institutions are founded on universalism as the most important value.⁵ However, the concept of values and education changed over time as we shall presently see.

Changing Role of Education and Implication for Values and Vice-versa

From the end of the 18th century the rise of academies and polytechnics expanded the traditional concept of educational institutions and universities as places for mainly humanistic studies to cover provision for skills, explore resource potential, produce economic goods and services, negotiate terms of transaction and manage material wealth. The value system also changed and became 'the criteria used by the members of the society to evaluate objects, ideas, acts, feelings or events as to their relative desirability, merit or correct-

ness'.⁶ Individual achievement or success through one's own efforts began to be regarded as an important value, as was the spirit of competition, with its consequence of 'survival of the fittest'. Hard work, delayed gratification and continual striving were another set of highly valued ways to succeed. Individual freedom and material progress also became important values in life. The school system started emphasizing these aspects in its content, method and structure. Material progress became the indicator of development of a society. In some countries certain religious organizations started parallel institutions offering religious instruction based on traditional values.

Although the principles of freedom, democracy, equality and justice remained as important values in spirit, educational agencies remained unconcerned about them in practice, as they were concerned with conservation and careful use of resources. People started emphasizing private property, the practice of capitalism, rationality and growth. Communist ideals practised in some parts of the world lost their ground at the close of the 20th century.

All this has led to unfair competition in the form of monopolies, interlocking directorates and price-fixing; entrepreneurs aiming at profit in total disregard of consumer welfare; and an ecology crisis due to a total neglect of conservation of material resources.

The phenomenon of globalization has brought to the fore issues of justice, equity, freedom, democracy and human rights. Thanks to the development of communication and information technology, concern for the underprivileged has also become important.

Belief in private property has converted much green area into concrete buildings in the name of urban development. Belief in material progress has polluted air and water in the name of industrial development.

In industrialized and commercialized societies, values changed with emphasis on material progress, and religious education was complemented by secular education with more emphasis on understanding different religions, freedom and human rights. We now discuss the problems confronting human civilization at the close of the 20th century.

Problems Facing Society Today

Towards the close of the 20th century, several important changes occurred in human life all over the world, which require special attention on redefining values on the international scale.

First, development of communication and information technology has made the world a global village with improved interaction among the peoples of the world. This has also contributed to the widening of disparity among them. The phenomenon of globalization has brought to the fore issues of justice, equity, freedom, democracy and human rights. Thanks to the development of communication and information technology, concern for the underprivileged has also become important.

Second, the rejection of communist ideology, while resulting in some convergence in the development strategies of the countries, has brought about ethnic conflicts, and nationalistic and religious fanaticism. Never has one felt so much need for tolerance and culture of peace.

Third, greed for material progress has no limits: deforestation, global warming and pollution—consequences of industrial development—are making the earth difficult to live in. Concern for the protection of environment has never been so important.

Finally, the development of biotechnol-

ogy and bio-informatics has brought about increased agricultural production, better medical facilities, and some environmental gains. Simultaneously, it has also created problems of gene cloning and surrogate motherhood, raising complex ethical issues. 'The impact of ethics can be measured in high-technology areas such as biology and medicine, as well as in the arcane vagaries of computerization, a phenomenon which is affecting all spheres including private life. If we neglect to make a connection between basic ethics and technological progress, we would be ushering in an era of "barbarism with a human face".'⁷

These have led us to the re-articulation of the need for value-based education in the 21st century, in content, structure and method.

Value-based Education for the 21st Century and the Role of Intergovernmental and Non-governmental Agencies

While the basic values of seeking truth, practising honesty and appreciating beauty remain intact, secular values like practice of tolerance, self-respect, love of human dignity, respect and compassion for others, individual freedom and human rights, internationalism, rejection of cruelty, practice of non-violence and culture of peace have become more important today because of the problems facing the human race. These became the principal preoccupations of international organizations.

The United Nations, in its charter in 1945, established three pillars—peace, justice and freedom—as follows: 'We, the peoples of the United Nations, determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights... in the equal rights of men and women, ... to practice tolerance and live together in peace.'⁸

Sometime later UNESCO, the United Nations' specialized agency for education, science and culture, was established 'to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education,

science and culture, in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for human rights and fundamental freedom which are affirmed for the peoples of the world'.⁹

Since the establishment of UNESCO, a number of standard-setting instruments have been developed to delineate the basic principles of education for peace and human rights. Among them are the following: (1) the recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace, and Education Relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedom (Paris, 1974); (2) World Plan of Action on Education for Human Rights and Democracy (Montreal, 1993); (3) Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993); (4) Declaration and Integrated Framework of Action in Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy (Paris, 1995); (5) Plan of Action for the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004). These action plans are executed under the guidance of the UNESCO Advisory Committee on Education for Peace, Human Rights, Democracy, International Understanding and Tolerance.¹⁰ They are coupled with a series of regional meetings and work-

Since educational policies can contribute to the development of understanding, solidarity and tolerance among individuals and among ethnic, social, cultural and religious groups, education can be the main instrument to promote knowledge, values, attitudes and skills conducive to respect for human rights and to building a culture of peace and democracy.

shops held in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe.

Since educational policies can contribute to the development of understanding, solidarity and tolerance among individuals and ethnic, social, cultural and religious groups, education can be the main instrument to promote knowledge, values, attitudes and skills conducive to respect for human rights and to building a culture of peace and democracy.

The Conference of European Ministers of Education (MINEDUROPE, 1988) gave the basis for creating a more lively perception of values, thinking and behaviour that follow from the recognition of humanistic, cultural and international dimensions of education. Educators were encouraged to realize this emphasis on value-based education.

As a result, guidelines on values for the humanistic and international dimensions of education were prepared in cooperation with non-governmental organizations.¹¹ These guidelines pay attention to the ways in which values can be integrated into the curriculum. They are built on the belief that consensus in relation to value issues is worth aiming for, although in moral philosophy the debate among philosophers about the identification and nature of values is a central issue. In these guidelines attempts have been made to iden-

tify principles which are essential cornerstones on which an education for a humanistic and international society must be built. These are: self-esteem, both personal and cultural; respect and tolerance for others as individuals and as members of ethnic/cultural groups; a sense of belonging—all must have a secure physical, emotional and political locus within society; a sense of responsibility in relation to social, economic, cultural and environmental factors; and an appreciation of the importance of learning. These principles need to go hand in hand with certain ethical qualities, for example, openness, willingness to discuss and listen, an attitude of goodwill towards others, not insisting on one's own rights, and a spirit of decency. These principles are not negotiable. The ethical qualities of openness and decency would promote and preserve an 'uneasy equilibrium which is constantly in need of repair'.¹²

In its 44th session of the International Conference on Education held in 1995, MINEDUROPE adopted a declaration and invited the Director-General of UNESCO to present to the General Conference in November 1995 a 'Framework of Action' that would allow member states and UNESCO to integrate within a coherent policy education for peace, human rights and democracy in the perspective of sustainable development.¹³

The 'Integrated Framework of Action' (see item 4 above) emphasized the development in each individual of a sense of universal values and types of behaviour on which a culture of peace can be predicated. Education, it was emphasized, must develop the ability to value freedom and the skills to meet its challenges; it must develop the ability to recognize and accept the values which exist in the diversity of individuals, genders, peoples and cultures, and develop the ability to communicate, share and cooperate with others; it must develop the ability of non-violent conflict resolution and promote the development of inner peace in the minds of students so that they can

UNESCO is acting at the global level and national levels. A unit has been created for education and training to inculcate values for peace, human rights, democracy, tolerance and international understanding with activities in the areas of elaboration and dissemination of teaching materials and pedagogical aids in different languages.

establish firmly the qualities of tolerance, compassion, sharing and caring; it must cultivate in citizens the ability to make informal choices; it must teach citizens to respect cultural heritage, protect the environment, adopt methods of production and consumption leading to sustainable development, with harmony between individual and collective values and between immediate basic needs and long-term interests; and finally, it must cultivate feelings of solidarity and equity at the national and international levels.¹⁴ Strategies to achieve these aims and the lines of action in respect of the content, teaching materials and resources, programmes of reading, expression and promotion of foreign languages, educational establishments, training of teachers, action on behalf of vulnerable groups, research and development, higher education, coordination between the education sector and other agents of socialization, regional and international cooperation have been designed for the use of member states of the UNESCO to promote education for peace, human rights and democracy. Linkage has also been established between UNESCO and the United Nations in delineating common goals and strategies for action to build a culture of peace with education used as the leading modality.

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There are two other units, one concentrating on policy-oriented research, advocacy of action and exchange and dissemination of information; and the other on capacity building and technical support for material and sub-regional, regional and international projects in this area.¹⁵

Many non-governmental organizations also joined hands with the United Nations sys-

tem to propagate values and education for the 21st century. India has taken a leading role in this respect. I have already mentioned the Ramakrishna Mission, which was the pioneer organization to introduce universalism in its educational institutions. The Central Board of Secondary Education, an autonomous government agency, has prepared a handbook for teachers on value education for secondary school students.¹⁶

The guidebook *Living Values*¹⁷ articulates twelve value statements addressing the universal aspects of spiritual and moral values. These values are: cooperation, freedom, happiness, honesty, humility, love, peace, respect, responsibility, simplicity, tolerance and unity. The set of training materials provide comprehensively the content, method of instruction, and structure of lessons in theory and practice. These materials are now being tried in a number of countries and deserve to be internationally disseminated.

Concluding Remarks

The year 2000 was proclaimed by UNESCO as the International Year of the Culture of Peace. Proclamations are not enough if they are not vigorously followed by actions. Education is the main instrument for such ac-

Educational institutions and local, national and international agencies have to work together to make value-based education an essential component of educational programmes to change the attitudes and behaviour of the human race. According to UNESCO, 'Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed'.

tions. The educational institutions of the member states of UNESCO have now the necessary courseware to introduce value-based educational programmes, incorporating both spiritual and secular values to build a culture of peace.

Educational institutions and local, national and international agencies have to work together to make value-based education an essential component of educational programmes to change the attitudes and behaviour of the human race. According to UNESCO, 'Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed'.¹⁸

I would like to conclude this paper with a statement from the Director-General of UNESCO:

I proclaim forcefully ... we must henceforth be ready to pay the price of peace as we have paid with millions of human lives the price of war; that the diversity of cultures, the very basis of our identities and sense of belonging, should unite us around ideals proclaimed by our constitution and never again divide us; that religions founded on love should not lead us to confrontation and hatred; and that ideologies, through freedom of expression and participation,¹⁹ should serve democracy and not coercion.

These are the values we need most at the dawn of the 21st century, and our education should be based on these values. *

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Maps for Spirituality

PRAVRAJIKA VIVEKAPRANA

The system of thought called Vedanta arose some five thousand years ago in India. It is based on a group of books called the Vedas, which contain both secular and spiritual thought. The term Vedanta, however, applies only to that which describes the way of mapping man's inward journey. As human beings we are all looking for a map to show us where we came from, why we are where we are, and where we are trying to go.

The Outward and Inward Journeys

In answer to this urge to understand human beings in depth, all cultures and races have drawn maps. Some of them are in the field of religion and some in the field of secular understanding. The West has given us physical maps of our journey that tell us how we, as a species, have arrived at this level after billions of years of journeying through space and time. Western thinkers have made tremendous efforts to help us understand how we evolve physically. Asia, on the other hand, has given us a map charting the inner journey of man.

The outer journey is visible. We can put a human cell under a microscope or take some cells from an animal or a plant and compare them with our own, and we can see some links to show our relationship with the external world.

When it comes to the internal world, the relationship is vague and we are asked to take religious maps on faith. Priests or other clergy have told us about the journey to progress, the purpose of human life, how it should be led, and, finally, they give us an idea of our destination. It is safe to say that there have been such maps in almost every country, race and culture in the world, as well as priests who in-

terpreted them and assumed responsibility for their followers. Men and women have lived their daily lives having faith in them, and they have worked. How is it that such maps have worked for a long time and yet do not seem to be working today?

In the 19th century Western science began to ask some fundamental questions. It seems to have proved on one or two basic issues—such as the earth was created only a few thousand years ago—that religious books are not infallible. We now take it for granted that these maps are improbable.

We have come a very long way and our understanding has undergone great changes, but if we really wish to understand our destination, we must understand that there is something inherent within us which belongs to our past. If we are asked to trace our path back to the unicellular amoeba, it becomes a bit too much. It is far simpler to take on faith the interpretations of priests and their promise that we are going in the right direction.

Other Maps versus the Vedantic Map

The difference between the Vedantic map and the maps popular in other religions is only this: in Vedanta there are two or three maps side by side. Some have taken the simplest map, the same as that of any religion, and others have taken more complicated maps that show us that in some way we inherit our own past.

The first map, then, is the one based on religious books which have been interpreted to us by priests and clergy whose directions we were to take on faith. In the popular map of religions the answer was that it is God who is responsible. God created the universe, and as God's creatures, we have no right to ask ques-

tions because our intelligence cannot compare with the intelligence of God. We were told not to have doubts, but simply follow a set of rules. This was the simplest map, which was enough for humanity for two thousand years or more, because we had not yet evolved a personal ego which would give us the courage to ask questions, though we still might not be able to answer them.

The second map is that of science which tells us that genes carry all our characteristics. We take it on trust that our genes and the genes found in fish are similar. That way we inherit an enormous history.

Advaita Vedanta, the third map, says that as soon as we become physically part of the human nervous system, we also begin to evolve as individuals. In addition to the path of all the species, there is an individual path for each one of us. Some rare Vedantic sages delved deeply into the questions of how long we have been here, where we are trying to go, why we started the journey

at all, and who is responsible for it. They tell us that not only time and space are relative, but millions and millions of births, personal as well as belonging to the species, are not true in the absolute sense. It says that we need to realize that living our lives is like watching a film. What we need to do is find the Creator within ourselves. Time and space, the Creator, the projector, the camera—everything can be found within.

Dvaita, Vishishtadvaita and Advaita

We have, then, three levels of mapping. The first is called *dvaita* or dualism, according

to which the multiplicity around us is real. Since we take it for granted that it is real, the only way out of such multiplicity is to believe that there is someone responsible for it; common sense tells us that we cannot be responsible for all the complications on earth. The first map says, 'There is a Creator out there somewhere beyond the clouds who is responsible for this creation and we do not have the right to ask questions.' There are people—and this includes most of us—who cannot accept this map any longer. We want to know something more, understand something subtler.

Western science has shown us a beautiful

world of energy into which melt all shapes and forms, including ourselves. It seems to vanish and reappear: the invisible constantly becoming visible and the visible vanishing into the invisible. When we articulate the thoughts in our minds, they become manifest; when we become quiet, they vanish. When we go to sleep, the ego vanishes, and with it vanish the world, our

thoughts—in fact, everything. But in the morning when we wake up, all of them reappear. This is the next map of interpretation called *vishishtadvaita* or qualified non-dualism. Since multiplicity cannot be the ultimate truth about either ourselves or the universe around us, non-dualism means that we are moving towards a reality that is not multiple.

There is a unity we all hanker after, and we try to find it in various ways. Every religion has tried to move us in the direction of unity, to simplify our complicated experiences. The first map tells us that there is a God who created the world, we deal with the

The first map tells us that there is a God who created the world, we deal with the world only as long as we need it, and we should not ask useless questions because they can never be answered. The second map, science, asks why we cannot ask questions, that there are innumerable questions to be answered. In the end science itself seems to push us into interpreting everything in terms of duality.

world only as long as we need it, and we should not ask useless questions because they can never be answered. The second map, science, asks why we cannot ask questions, that there are innumerable questions to be answered. In the end science itself seems to push us into interpreting everything in terms of duality: we are here, our experience is here.

We accept as real the multiplicity revealed to us by our sense organs. But multiplicity is nothing but duality. On this earth there is nothing but our experience. This should indicate that we, as intelligent observers, are the experiencer, distinct from the experienced. The problem with the second map is that science refers only to the material universe, not to us. There can be all kinds of experiences, but it is all *our* experience. From multiplicity, we necessarily come to duality. Whether an experience is physical or subtle, it is our experience. The answer then becomes very simple: there is nothing but ourselves and our experience.

The moment we conclude that our thoughts are our own experience, we encounter a tremendous barrier: we find that these experiences simply happen to us. Thoughts rise, bubbling up from a source within ourselves, we do not know how, we do not know why, and we do not know how to control them. As long as they are pleasant, we do not mind; we let them play around. The moment they become unpleasant and we wish to control them, we find we cannot. We do not have the understanding or control, to sit quietly for a few minutes and not go crazy.

We hunt for the controller, we search within our experiences for a way to make them pleasant, but if there is anything that is persistent on earth, it is the unpleasantness of human experience and the fact that we do not know what to do about it. The first map says that we need not bother about it, we need only to listen to a priest who will give us an interpretation such as once upon a time somebody committed an original sin and we are suffering as the result of that. Most of the popular religions have similar stories. The common man has not wished to accept responsibility for his

own experiences, so has accepted such a simple map to enable him to move a little, at least so as not to become completely paralysed.

Today we are trying to accept our burden, to take our own responsibility, to control ourselves, and we find that it is impossible. We take drugs, we get depressed, we want to sleep all the time, we go into a neurotic state because we now know that there is

no God who is in control. We wish to be in control but, practically, we are not. This is a problem everywhere today, in India as well as in the West.

The first map works no longer and the second map, discovered by science, still confronts us with an overwhelming question: since as the experiencer we have no control over our experience, what are we to do? Advaita Vedanta tells us that the answer is within us, not in the physical world, which is only an interpretation of our senses. It shows us a third map according to which multiplicity vanishes into duality and duality vanishes

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into unity. The great conclusion of the rishis, or great sages who studied the problem deeply in ancient times, was that the experimenter, the experienced and the experience are one and the same reality. It is explained as follows.

Three States of Consciousness

In the waking state there is the world and the experimenter. The experience of the world depends on us; our existence does not depend on the experience of the world.

In the next state, the state of dream, we are there and the world is also there. It is possible for our minds to create a complicated universe of time and space, colour, shape and sound. All this seems to be within ourselves. We are given the hint that we are actually complex and powerful beings within whom lies the secret of the universe: the experience depends on the experimenter, not the other way round. We must have the courage to take hold of this awareness that we are the creators of our own dreams. We are not being asked to interpret dreams, we are being asked to understand that within us lies the Creator, the possibility of creation, the possibility of sound, light, colours; everything is within us.

The next step is the level of consciousness where the experimenter, as well as the experience, vanishes. This is the state of deep sleep. When we wake up, we say we slept: we were there, but what were we? In your dream you are watching the dream and yet there is somebody watching you, a focal point, a point of light—and that is your individuality. The dream happens around this individuality, which just witnesses the dream. When we wake up, we know we dreamt.

How is it that we have the capacity to see ourselves in our dreams? It is an important hint that there is a level within us where everything becomes unity. We ourselves as witnesses have the capacity to separate experi-

ence into duality and then into multiplicity. Therefore, we should have the capacity to bring it back to the level of unitary experience.

We are spiritual and there is no way we can be anything else, but we dream about the material and subtle worlds. We play with our dreams because we love to play, we love to create duality. After the creation of duality, multiplicity becomes logical, but it also becomes burdensome. Then only do we start searching for something simpler.

Need to Assume Responsibility for Our Evolution

Personal evolution cannot be mapped by anyone outside ourselves. The third map, Advaita Vedanta, asks us whether or not we are courageous enough to take up responsibility for our own evolution, without laying the blame on God or a Devil outside. It asks us to take up a method and give it a try and see whether or not it is possible. At this last level of mapping we are shown a way to understanding things. The question is, are we prepared for it? To acquire such understanding, we must take the whole thing in our own hands and ready ourselves for personal evolution. We must learn a method and we must practise it. We have to develop deep concentration, we have to practise voluntarily so that all the energy within our system is channelled in one particular direction and becomes like a laser beam which brings light to what is happening within ourselves.

Out of unity comes duality, out of duality comes multiplicity, and just as they appeared they can also be reversed. Why, then, did we start at all? Advaita Vedanta says that the question is unanswerable standing at the level of multiplicity. To know what Mount Everest looks like from the top, you have to stand there and see it for yourself. In other words, we need to follow spiritual disciplines and discover the truth for ourselves. *

On Bettering Ourselves

DR S DANDAPANI

Among God's creations man is supposed to have pride of place at the top. In the scale of evolution birds and animals are left far behind. How does it happen? The possession of mind and its manifold manifestations demarcate the *Homo sapiens* from the subhuman species. However, mastery of mind alone contributes to the well-being of human beings. This is possible only when one's basic needs are met. Men and animals share common needs that are primarily physiological. These are vital for survival. Animals rest contented when their basic needs for survival are met. But men are not satisfied merely with the fulfilment of the basic needs. The mind within man prompts

conduct by which one can discipline one's mind, curtail one's needs and lead a contented family and social life. However, this antediluvian advice will have few takers. Who cares to listen to the pearls of wisdom of the enlightened saints and sages for whom the eternal bliss was more valuable than the pseudo bliss lesser mortals are after!

Psychoanalytic Perspective: The Id

The basic building blocks which every individual is endowed with at birth, according to Sigmund Freud, comprise the untamed, uncivilized, blind, instinctual impulses, always seeking immediate gratification regardless of

Religion prescribes a personal code of conduct by which one can discipline one's mind, curtail one's needs and lead a contented family and social life. However, this antediluvian advice will have few takers. Who cares to listen to the pearls of wisdom of the enlightened saints and sages for whom the eternal bliss was more valuable than the pseudo bliss lesser mortals are after!

him to go beyond these basic needs and generate a host of other needs. With limited needs and easier fulfilment animals roam around, relatively free from worries. Perhaps these creatures enjoy a kind of equanimity that eludes those at the higher level of evolution.

The greater the multiplicity of needs, the larger the scope for misery. Perhaps, our ancestors, the Stone Age men, enjoyed this privilege of living with limited needs. Men in metropolitan cities are constantly bombarded by several media that compete with one another in generating more and more needs. A needy person becomes greedy and sacrifices all values of life.

Religion prescribes a personal code of

social approval or disapproval. That is id—the primitive, selfish and destructive propensity. It lends itself to expansion like 'I demand', 'I desire', 'I destroy', the first two letters of the word, 'idiot' as well. No wonder the deposed despot, cannibal, of Uganda was named Idi Amin. During early infancy, parents are usually permissive and tolerant. Hence id enjoys unbridled expression. The baby, especially the first offspring, can demand anything and get it. Id is governed by the pleasure principle, according to Freud. If grown-ups were to behave the way they did during infancy, the world would be a playhouse. Everyone, sooner or later, is forced to give up such infantile pleasures.

The Ego

As one evolves from infancy to childhood and adolescence, a perceptible change in behaviour occurs—a sort of restraint, a subdued expression of emotion, a spirit of tolerance, a give-and-take attitude, and rudiments of sophistication and refinement, in tune with the world of reality. Stubbornness and primitive selfishness give place to acquiescence and accommodation. Contact with reality subdues the id and thus the ego or the self emerges.

The ego is that portion of the psychic apparatus which is in contact with external reality. It develops out of the id. Like the bark of the tree it protects the id, but draws energy from the id in order to accomplish this. Thus the ego is created by the id in an attempt to cope with the needs to reduce tension and increase pleasure. To do this, however, the ego must in turn control or modulate the id's impulses so that the individual can pursue less immediate and more realistic approaches. Thus, according to Freud, the ego is but the

punishment. Even when parents are not present, children tend to feel guilty whenever they transgress the codes and rules of conduct. Whenever a child receives punishment he develops a conscience. Whenever he receives reward for approved behaviour the ego-ideal is formed. This incorporation or internalization of the social expectation within oneself is termed introjection. The superego serves as a judge or censor over the activities and thoughts of the ego. It is the repository of moral codes and standards of conduct.

A weakened ego and superego would strengthen the id that would spell catastrophe in society. A good home, a disciplined school and an integrated community life would contribute towards wholesome development of values.

On Becoming a Person

Deep within every individual lies a powerful urge to grow up and blossom out as a person-to-be, distinguishing him from the

Each person has a name while some earn a name in life. A flock of sheep or a herd of elephants do not seem to bear individual names while a congregation of men and women in a church greet each other by their individual names. The quest for everyone is to become a person.

awareness of a struggle between the strivings of the id and opportunities of the environment. A lid over the id is essential for normal social living. The ego is governed by the reality principle.

The Superego

Living in a society necessitates conformity with social codes and cultural values. Children spend most of their time at home amidst parents and siblings. Parents tend to instil in them codes of morality, gently to start with. As years pass by, grown up children realize that violation of family codes would be frowned at, met with reproof and eventually

subhuman species. We might be struck at the majesty of an elephant or the ferocity of a tiger or the elegant plumage of a peacock. But in none of these cases, do we use the term personality. It is reserved primarily for the members of the *Homo sapiens*.

Born as a helpless infant, totally dependent upon its mother for survival, the human baby grows, matures, develops, learns and comes to be reckoned as a person among several persons in this world. It is a longitudinal process. Some leave a legacy, a landmark on the sands of time, to be cherished, remembered and revered for centuries. Others, nevertheless, lead a quiet, dignified life, raising a fam-

ily and fulfilling the purpose ordained by God.

Each person has a name while some earn a name in life. A flock of sheep or a herd of elephants do not seem to bear individual names while a congregation of men and women in a church greet each other by their individual names. The quest for everyone is to *become* a person. Let us pause and have a glimpse of the values cherished by a few persons of eminence.

Some Eminent Exemplars

Charles Dickens, the novelist par excellence: The French Revolution chilled everyone's blood. The atrocities perpetrated by the French dictatorship paralysed life to such an extent that the people were mortally afraid even to whisper. Many lived and died in those

of times. The opening paragraph of his novel *A Tale of Two Cities* cannot be bettered: 'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times; it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness; it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity; it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness; it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.'

Mahatma Gandhi, the freedom fighter: The British rule in India was so firm and unshakable that few would have foreseen that a frail-looking Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi would display such a motivational force to pack the British off Bombay's coast. When Gandhi went to London to study law he might not have had the faintest idea that one day he would defy British rule and law with his weapon of non-violence. The humiliation he underwent in South Africa and the sufferings

Among life's greatest blessings are love and hope and trust—to help us do the things we 'should'. Like a smile, when given away, love can lighten a burden or brighten a day. Similarly, hope is a comforting light, a lamp in the night. With trust, more joys appear; more cares are gone.

dark days. Charles Dickens also lived and died—not before he left an immortal classic for posterity: *A Tale of Two Cities*.

Born and brought up in England in poverty, a son of a minor clerk in the Navy Post Office, young Dickens spent his childhood under the shadow of economic insecurity. His father had to be lodged in the debtors' prison, and his mother with four of her children went to join her husband in prison. Young Charles was sent to work at a factory where for six shillings a week he had to do menial jobs. Those few months were for Dickens a time of utter misery, humiliation and despair, the memory of which he could never quite shake off. What catapulted him to the pinnacle of glory as an outstanding novelist was sheer determination, solid will and an indomitable spirit to survive the worst of times and make it the best

of the fellow Indians there kindled his nationalistic spirit to fight for human rights. It was in South Africa that Gandhi practised and perfected non-violence. Upon return to India, he turned a crusader for freedom. Perhaps, he is the only person in the world with the honorific 'Mahatma'!

Saints and holy men: We should be proud of the fact that we live in a land where long long ago lived an extraordinary person—Adi Shankara—who could spread the Advaita philosophy from Kanya Kumari to Kashmir within an incredibly short span of life! Another legendary figure—Swami Vivekananda—could mesmerize by his brilliant exposition of Vedanta the galaxy of intellectuals at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago. He was just in his thirties then! Purandaradasa, a money-lender-turned-saint, and Saint Thya-

garaja, a nondescript devotee of Lord Rama, could compose thousands of lyrics that illumine the world of music to this day!

Value Cultivation

Our lives are brightened or darkened, enriched or impoverished by the kind of attitude we cultivate towards our fellow human beings, besides the values we have imbibed and cherished. Among life's greatest blessings are love and hope and trust—to help us do the things we 'should'. Like a smile, when given away, love can lighten a burden or brighten a day. Similarly, hope is a comforting light, a lamp in the night. With trust, more joys appear; more cares are gone.

'The optimist sees the rose and not its thorns; the pessimist stares at the thorns, oblivious of the rose,' observed Kahlil Gibran, the Persian poet!

Family as a Catalyst

Everyone has a house, very few have homes! One should feel homely at home and not lonely! A home lays the foundation for one's values of life. A home is meant for family life. There is enough caring and sharing in a family—a training ground where children grow into responsible adults. Most of the problems of disturbed children originate in their early years. Some of the unworthy aspects of upbringing a child are overprotection, indifference, unfair comparison, extreme permissiveness, unrealistic level of aspiration, perfectionism and rejection. Kids need love, support, warmth, trust, a sense of belonging, helpful guidance, encouragement and, above all, worthy role models for emulation.

Some families are rather rigid. They put clamps on what children can do or say. Some parents attempt to compensate through their children what they themselves could not accomplish in life. Pushing children towards superior academic pursuits sometimes proves

counterproductive. It generates in them tensions that prevent their accomplishing what they would have had they been left alone. Sometimes conscientious parents are unable to let their children grow up. When a child is loved for what he is, rather than what he ought to be, he develops confidence that he is significant and worthy and that he can trust a friendly world. If, on the other hand, he is without this affection, he is likely to develop hostile and pessimistic views of the world and of even himself.

Adler traced the origin of the feelings of inferiority to the early childhood experiences and methods of upbringing by parents. According to Adler a child could be spoiled in two ways. Either he could be pampered by overindulgence or bullied by undue restraint and regimentation. The pampered one becomes whimsical and egotistic, while the bullied never learns to imbibe the attitude of give-and-take, a spirit of accommodation and compromise. Having been accustomed to a sort of overbearing attitude at home, the bullied one expects to retain the same image and status among his playmates. It is difficult for him to realize that he is one among a multitude and should gracefully accept a secondary role at times. The bullied one might nurse a feeling of distrust and hostility at home and might carry over the same tendencies to school as well. He would remain aloof and withdrawn. Hence, according to Adler, one's lifestyle depends upon parental attitude and upbringing, which might make or mar personality development.

Urbanization as well as the exodus of families from the closely knit family life in rural surroundings, and unhealthy attitudes promoted by the electronic media have almost decimated a quiet, healthy family life. Let us better ourselves and re-establish the glory of family life so as to arrest the increasing alienation of people from their kith and kin. *

Avadhūta Upaniṣad

TRANSLATED BY SWAMI ATMAPRIYANANDA

The obligation to study etc.

श्रवणादिविधानम्

शृण्वन्त्वज्ञाततत्त्वास्ते जानन्कस्माच्छृणोम्यहम् ।

मन्यन्तां संशयापन्ना न मन्येऽहमसंशयः ॥१८॥

18. Let them, who are ignorant of the Reality, engage in listening [about It, in studies]; knowing [the Truth or Reality], wherefore shall I listen [study]? Let them, who are attended with doubts, reflect [on what has been studied]. I, who am free from doubt, do not [need to] cogitate (exercise my mental faculties).

विपर्यस्तो निदिध्यासे किं ध्यानमविपर्यये ।

देहात्मत्वविपर्यासं न कदाचिद्भ्रजाम्यहम् ॥१९॥

19. Had I been under any misapprehension [about the Truth], I might have resorted to deep meditation; what [need is there of] meditation [for me], who am free from any misapprehension or doubt? [For], I never experience the confusion [arising from] the mix-up of the body with the Self (Spirit).

अहं मनुष्य इत्यादिव्यवहारो विनाप्यमुम् ।

विपर्यासं चिराभ्यस्तवासनातोऽवकल्पते ॥२०॥

20. The worldly behaviour [seen in statements like] ‘I am a person’ [is possible] even without the misapprehension (confusion) [described above], for it corresponds to [and arises from] the latent impressions accumulated due to long-standing practice [that has become habitual].

आरब्धकर्मणि क्षीणे व्यवहारो निवर्तते ।

कर्मक्षये त्वसौ नैव शाम्येद्ध्यानसहस्रतः ॥२१॥

21. The worldly behaviour [as described above] ceases when the actions already set in motion (*prārabdha-karma*) become attenuated. It (this type of worldly behaviour) will not come to an end unless the [*prārabdha-*] *karma* is exhausted; not even through thousands of meditative efforts.

विरलत्वं व्यवहृतेरिष्टं चेद्ध्यानमस्तु ते ।

अबाधिकां व्यवहृतिं पश्यन्ध्यायाम्यहं कुतः ॥२२॥

22. Let there be meditation for you, in case you wish scarceness of worldly dealings. Wherefore is meditation for me who see no hindrance from worldly interactions?¹

विक्षेपो नास्ति यस्मान्मे न समाधिस्ततो मम ।

विक्षेपो वा समाधिर्वा मनसः स्याद्विकारिणः ॥२३॥

23. Since I do not have any distraction (or confusion in my mind), there is no [practice of]

meditation (*samādhi*) for me either. [For, after all] distraction as well as meditation are of the mind, which undergoes modifications.²

नित्यानुभवरूपस्य को मेऽत्रानुभवः पृथक् ।

कृतं कृत्यं प्रापणीयं प्राप्तमित्येव नित्यशः ॥२४॥

24. What separate experience can there be for me, who am of the very nature of eternal experience? Whatever had to be done has been done by me, and whatever had to be attained has been attained forever.

व्यवहारो लौकिको वा शास्त्रीयो वान्यथापि वा ।

ममाकर्तृरूपस्य यथारब्धं प्रवर्तताम् ॥२५॥

25. Let my dealings, be they worldly, scriptural or otherwise, proceed in the same manner as they have started, I being a non-agent and unstained [by any of my actions].

अथवा कृतकृत्योऽपि लोकानुग्रहकाम्यया ।

शास्त्रीयेणैव मार्गेण वर्तेऽहं मम का क्षतिः ॥२६॥

26. Or, desiring to be a blessing to humanity [at large], let me remain devoted to the path prescribed by the scriptures, although I have attained [the ultimate] fulfilment; what would be my loss [anyway, thereby]?

(to be continued)

Notes

1. The apparent actions of an *avadhūta*, who has realized his identity with the actionless Self (*niṣkriya ātman*), are on account of his *prārabdha-karma*. This *karma*, which has begun even before his attainment of Knowledge, would have to be exhausted in their natural course. But they do not in any way bind or affect him, a *jñānin*.
2. Whereas I, being the changeless Self, do not and cannot undergo any modification.

If You Want Peace ...

Whatever the Lord wills, happens, and it is undoubtedly for our good. But the problem is that we neither understand it, nor have we any patience. Indeed there is no better way to peace than if we could only believe that whatever the Lord does is good for us. If one does not have this understanding, one cannot have peace of mind. Happiness and misery, disease and grief—these are all inevitable as long as one lives in the body. But it is not right to think that what gives me happiness is good and what causes me pain is bad. This is sheer selfishness. May the Lord always keep us unperturbed, in happiness as well as sorrow, in disease and in grief. May we never be devoid of right understanding in every situation. That is my sincere prayer to the Lord

—Swami Turiyananda, *Spiritual Treasures*, 167.

❧ Glimpses of Holy Lives ❧

God's Playmate

God sports with His devotees according to their attitude towards Him. The well-known 16th century saint Govindadas looked upon Lord Srinathji (Krishna) as his Friend.

Govindadas (1506-86) was born in Antri, a village near Vrindaban, and in his youth became famous for his knowledge of poetry and music. He was initiated into spiritual life by the great Goswami Vitthalnath in 1536. Pure and highly spiritual from his boyhood, he would go into the forest and spend the greater part of the day in devotional singing. Such was his musical talent that Vitthalnath honoured him with the title *kavishoar* ('chief of poets') and included him among the *ashtachap* poets. Even Akbar and Tansen used to visit him from time to time in disguise to enjoy his heavenly music. People who knew Govindadas were as much awed by his aloofness and detachment as they were attracted by his knowledge and devotion to God.

Once, captivated by Govindadas' devotional songs, Srinathji appeared before him with Radharani. The Lord sang with His devotee, while His Divine Consort kept time! For all that, Govindadas did not like the ordinary devotee's attitude of humility. Why should a person who considers himself so close to the all-powerful Lord feel meek and lowly? Govindadas was always merry and fun-loving.

Lord Srinathji used to appear before Govindadas and play with him. One day, as the priest of the Srinathji temple was getting ready the noon offering for the Lord, Govindadas came tearing into the temple and, before anybody could stop him, struck the Lord's image forcefully with a stone! The assembled devotees were appalled, and the horrified priest had Govindadas thrown out of

the temple. Govindadas was still waiting outside when Vitthalnath, his guru, arrived at the scene to see what had caused the commotion. The priest described the offense. And this was Govindadas' defence:

He was playing a game with Srinathji since that morning and his turn had just come, when the temple bell rang, calling Srinathji into the temple for His noon meal. Without a hint of respect for the rules of fair play, Srinathji abandoned the game and bolted. Not only that. For good measure, He even hit Govindadas with stones—three times, to be precise—before escaping into the sanctuary of the temple. Govindadas scrambled after Srinathji in hot pursuit but could only manage to hit Him once. He was waiting for Srinathji to come out again after His meal, so he could get even with Him!

Meanwhile, the priest who had gone inside to get on with his duties, received an indication that the Lord was unwilling to eat. His chum was already cross with Him—and hungry. And now, adding insult to injury, he had been unceremoniously ejected from His house. How could the Lord relish His meal when His dear friend was fretting outside in the sun! The priest saw this as a bad omen: Srinathji looked gloomy and depressed! He sent word to Vitthalnath. Himself a highly evolved soul, Vitthalnath knew that the Lord could only be appeased by first pacifying Govindadas. He took Govindadas into the temple and arranged for his meal *with* his Divine Companion.

It is a basic spiritual law that what we take to be real affects our whole personality, thoughts, emotions and actions. Our whole being responds to this reality. Govindadas' life is a vindication of this law. *

Devoted to the Core!

In a village called Mangalveda there lived an untouchable belonging to the Mahar caste. His name was Chokha Mela. Chokha made his living by carrying dead bodies of animals out of the village. Simple and guileless, Chokha was endowed with strong religious sentiments even from his childhood. Lord Vitthala of Pandharpur was his Chosen Deity. He would often visit Pandharpur to see the Lord of his heart. During these visits he would listen to Sant Namdev's kirtan. One day he was initiated into spiritual life by Namdev.

A new life began for Chokha after initiation. His mind now began to remain engrossed in repeating the name of his dear Vitthala, even in the midst of his daily chores. Grave misfortunes visited him. But nothing could shake his unflinching devotion to his Lord. His mind was fixed on God alone. For Chokha the only place of refuge in this world was the door of Vitthala's temple. The temple courtyard trodden by devotees was the holiest of holy places for him; for, was the courtyard not sanctified by the dust of devotees' feet? He would roll on that holy ground and smear the dust on his body. God was pleased by Chokha's supreme devotion. Did He not say in the *Bhagavadgita* (9.29) that He resides in a devotee who worships Him with devotion, and the devotee in Him?

Being extremely delighted, Vitthala one night took Chokha into His shrine and blessed him with His vision. And not only that. The Lord removed His own golden necklace and put it around Chokha's neck! Chokha now emerged from the shrine. The temple priests had woken up by then. They were scandalized to see Chokha, an untouchable, coming out of the sanctum sanctorum. 'Chokha, you wretch, how could you get into the shrine without our

notice? How dare you did that? And what's this! Lord Vitthala's necklace on your neck! Good heavens! You cheat, you have stolen the necklace and defiled the Lord's image.' Saying so, the priests thrashed poor Chokha mercilessly, took away the necklace from him, and pushed him out of the temple precincts.

What was there for Chokha to worry about? He was rejected by the priests, but accepted by the Lord! His mind became more immersed in Vitthala. To those who worship Him with ceaseless remembrance, the Lord has promised to carry what they lack and preserve what they have (*Bhagavadgita*, 9.22). Here He did something special for Chokha. From then on Lord Vitthala carried dead animals out of the village. How could He disturb his devotee anymore? Vitthala became Chokha's servant, bound by the chains of His devotee's love. How could the poor priests understand this?

One day the villagers were repairing the boundary wall of the village. Chokha lent a helping hand. Accidentally, the wall collapsed, killing several people—including Chokha. The villagers set out to find the earthly remains of this saint, for the last rites. But they were perplexed. How to identify his body among many mutilated ones? Namdev, Chokha's guru, came to their rescue. He told them: 'Look for the bones from which Vitthala's name reverberates, and they will be Chokha's.' The villagers thus gathered Chokha's sacred bones from which resounded Vitthala's name. His guru interred the sacred remains of Chokha at the very door of Vitthala's temple at Pandharpur. A fitting tribute for a devotee who enslaved the Lord by his sheer devotion! *

Knowledge leads to unity; ignorance to diversity. —Sri Ramakrishna

Collected Works of Swami Tejasananda

Ed. Swami Atmapriyananda, Satchidananda Dhar, Kalyan Basu, Viswanath Das and Tapankumar Ghosh. Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira Alumni Association, PO Belur Nath, Dt Howrah, West Bengal 711202. 1999. 469 pp. Rs 150.

His students, colleagues and plain admirers are dispersed all over the world today. He chided them *all* some time. But none can call up his memories without a lump in the throat. I am yet to see anyone who remembers his 'rebuke' without a broad smile on his face—a smile that speaks of gratitude. He was Srimat Swami Tejasanandaji Maharaj, who used to say, '*Saadhur raag joler daag*, a sadhu's anger evaporates as quickly as a mark on water.'

His own fit of temper lasted no more than a few minutes, to be sure. The next moment he was your friend again—and, of course, philosopher and guide. He could switch himself on and off at will. Those close to him marvelled at his ability to be simultaneously attached to and detached from the job in hand. He would throw himself completely into it; he became *it*, and it became *him*, so to speak. But by the time he had got it over with, he had already found something equally, if not more, challenging to do. The job in hand at *that* point of time would claim all his attention. Which explains why everything he did was so well done. No wonder the alumni of the Vidyamandira end up talking about Tejasanandaji at their biennial meets even today.

The Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira Alumni Association has brought out a collection of Tejasanandaji's writings, which appropriately begins with a foreword by the President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Srimat Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj. This 'fairly comprehensive volume,' writes the swami, 'represents a compilation of Tejasanandaji's 'pub-

lished and unpublished works. The ex-students have, by this praiseworthy effort of theirs, partially repaid their *acharya-rina*, the debt that they owe to their *acharya*, teacher.'

This is a handsome tribute from a sage, and the Alumni Association deserves it. The nitpicker can point to 'defects', though. And I would dispose of it straightway. The editors themselves apologize for their failure to avoid printing errors despite best efforts. 'They could have upset Tejasanandaji Maharaj.' I do hope that they will be more careful next time around. But having said this, I must admit that such errors are not too many in the first place and, secondly, they are difficult to avoid, at least in the first edition, where the editors are otherwise busy and have nothing but their love's labour to rely on.

An important part of this book is an extremely well written biography. It shows how much Tejasanandaji packed into his active life, which was not very long going by today's life expectancies. But it is the quality of the work he put in as much as its volume that sets him apart. The editors deftly handle the whole gamut of experiences that made Tejasanandaji what he became—a sadhu in the sense in which Swami Vivekananda used the term.

Khagendranath Sikdar, as Srimat Swami Tejasanandaji Maharaj was called in his pre-monastic days, was born in 1896 to a humble, God-fearing family settled at a tiny village called Hapania in Manikganj, now in Bangladesh. His father Rajanikant was a *sirastedar* (keeper of records) at the Manikganj sub-divisional court.

Khagendranath was clearly above aver-

age as a schoolchild. So Rajanikant, hard up as he was, sent his son to Calcutta for higher studies. Khagendranath followed the post-graduate course in history at Calcutta University and came out third in the first class in his MA examination. Sir Asutosh Mukherjee, vice-chancellor, offered him a lectureship in the subject at the University. Khagendranath declined the offer, as his heart hungered for spirituality as propounded by Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda. So, he next joined the Ramakrishna Order immediately, you guess. No, actually, he did not.

The young man was destined to agonize over the contrary pulls for quite some time—his indwelling urge for spirituality on the one hand and his filial duty on the other. Mustn't he support the family that had brought him up? It needed him more than ever before now that his father on a meagre pension had to look after his ailing mother and two younger brothers at school. But then two of his 'meritorious class-fellows' had already joined the Order. Why shouldn't he follow suit?

Reverend Swami Shivanandaji's (Mahapurush Maharaj) advice at this point set his mind at rest—for a time. 'It is your duty first,' said Mahapurush Maharaj to the young Khagendranath, 'to help out your father, who has worked hard to educate you. He naturally expects you to take over from him now that he is old and retired, and you on top of that have acquitted yourself creditably in your examinations.'

Be that as it might, Khagendranath proceeded to Mayavati, to work as an assistant editor of the *Prabuddha Bharata* and also as diarist of the centre concerned. But the extreme cold there did not suit him. Meanwhile came a message from home that his mother had lost her sight and father had taken seriously ill. 'I hastened back home to attend to my sick parents,' Tejasanandaji later wrote in his memoirs. 'And being back again in the family circle, I gave up all thoughts of joining the Order—for the time being at least.'

Then he served a number of schools in succession—both as assistant teacher and as headmaster. On every occasion he brought the school he worked for back from the brink of collapse. He himself founded two separate primary schools—one for boys and the other for girls. He partly funded them himself but largely depended on *mushtibhiksha* (literally, fistfuls of rice begged from the people around).

As headmaster of the Diamond Harbour High School, Khagendranath came up against a powerful local lobby that lorded it over him and his staff. They misappropriated school property. Khagendranath got the act together to form a teachers' council and reconstitute the managing committee. The intruders cleared out.

Successes like these did not go to Khagendranath's head. His heart continued to hunger for spirituality. Came the Puja holidays, and he was off to the Varanasi Advaita Ashrama, in October 1927, to be precise. At the Ashrama Swami Jagadanandaji Maharaj was giving a course of lectures on the Upanishads for the monastic inmates there. Khagendranath followed this discourse with rapt attention. The fire in him being rekindled, he sent in his resignation without further ado to the Diamond Harbour School from Varanasi and joined the Ramakrishna Order. Swami Shivanandaji ordained him Brahmachari Jnanachaitanya.

The Madras Math called upon Brahmachari Jnanachaitanya to take charge of the *Vedanta Kesari*, which he edited with aplomb for over three years. Shivanandaji ordained him a sannyasin on 19 February 1931. It is thoughtful of the editors to give us the little-known fact that at this point Brahmachari Jnanachaitanya was renamed Swami Tejasananda Puri. (The reader should be told how 'Puri' came to be dropped.) Shortly thereafter he went to Varanasi, trekked to Uttarkashi in the Himalayas, and subsequently to Gangotri and Yamunotri. However, for the most part of

1931 to 1935, Tejasanandaji was deeply absorbed in *tapasya* at Mayakund on the bank of the Ganga and in the shrines in and around Rishikesh.

Be that as it might, he was called back to Belur Math to help edit a large number of books to synchronize with the centenary celebrations of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa's birth. The most important publication to come out on the occasion was the well-known *Cultural Heritage of India*.

Tejasanandaji was back at Mayavati in 1938 to edit the *Prabuddha Bharata* after the centenary was over. However, he was called back again in June 1941 to head a college, off the Math, to be constructed with the aim of imparting 'man-making education' as conceived by Swami Vivekananda. This was to be the future Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira, which marks Tejasanandaji's crowning glory.

'The Vidyamandira,' writes Tejasanandaji, 'constituted a bold departure from the existing pattern of educational institutions inasmuch as it enabled the students to come into intimate contact with their teachers, learn the dignity of labour and to receive an all-round training in an atmosphere of serene peace, discipline and moral purity.' This is a highly ambitious aim, and Tejasanandaji sought to achieve it throughout his life.

So when reports came in from many parts of India, and abroad, that the ex-students of the Vidyamandira were not just faring well but, more important, they were trusted 'for their character', Tejasanandaji was pleased to be able to write: 'It was therefore no wonder that the alumni of this residential institution with their feet firmly set on the soil of Indian culture, with their time properly utilised, energy duly canalised, heart immensely expanded and intellect rightly harnessed to useful and constructive activities would achieve continued brilliant successes in the university examination from year to year and become a beneficent influence in the social life

of the country.'

The Vidyamandira, which he built up together with Srimat Swami Vimuktanandaji Maharaj, is sometimes said to be standing on their 'ribs'. The metaphor is appropriate. All those who came into contact with Tejasanandaji as principal and Vimuktanandaji as secretary of the Vidyamandira know how they acted as souls inspired. Education for them was a mission, their path to God, to be exact. While Vimuktanandaji took care of the finances etc, Tejasanandaji looked after all academic matters.

Tejasanandaji wanted education to be so designed and imparted as to end casteism, communalism, and all forms of partisanship. It must wipe out the distinction between 'the high and the low, and the rich and the poor,' he said.

As part of Tejasanandaji's birth centenary celebration the Vidyamandira Alumni Association has brought out this superb collection of his writings in Bengali, Hindi and English. The essays are grouped under six heads: Great Lives, Indian Culture and Philosophy, Thoughts on Education, Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement, Nationalism and Indian Renaissance, and World Peace and Synthesis of Religions.

Tejasanandaji's students, in Indian and abroad, are reckoned in the thousands. They can now re-live their time with their 'Principal Maharaj', and in the Vidyamandira, thanks to the *Collected Works of Swami Tejasananda* (also called *Swami Tejasananda: Rachana Sangrah* in Bengali). The book has three sections: Bengali, Hindi and English. It is superbly printed on high-quality paper and is excellently bound. It is a treasure for all persons interested in education. It is worthy of being a collector's copy. Heavily subsidized by the Alumni Association, it is priced at just Rs 150.

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Reviews



*For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA
publishers need to send two copies of their latest publications.*

Yoga, Enlightenment and Perfection.
Brahmachari R M Umesh. Sri Vidyatirtha
Foundation, Chennai 600 004. 1999. 208
pp. Rs 25.

Yoga has been the unique contribution of India to the world. Beginning with the Indus Valley civilization, yogic practices uniformly prevailed in the Vedic and the Shramanic traditions. The *Yoga Sūtras* of Patanjali mark a systematic presentation of the philosophy and practice of yogic activities. The school of yoga is admitted by almost all the systems of Indian philosophy as the major propounder of a definite path leading to perfection. This is more true of the Advaita tradition which has treated the practice of yoga as a necessary precondition on the path to the realization of the Absolute Reality, namely Brahman.

Yoga, Enlightenment and Perfection is an authentic presentation of information dealing with the yoga practices of Sri Abhinava Vidyatirtha, the 35th pontiff of the Sringeri Sharada Peetham in Karnataka from 1954 to 1989. Having entered extraordinary perfection in yoga, the swami remained dedicated to the protection of Vedic tradition and discharged his duties as a monk and as head of a reputed religious institution.

A short account of the swami's life is provided in Part I of the book. Since his own spiritual attainments deeply involved the role of his guru Sri Chandrashekhara Bharati, a brief note on the teacher is also included. Part II is concerned with the subject-matter of the book. An elaborate account of the spiritual life of a yogi, beginning with hatha yoga practices and leading up to enlightenment and after, is detailed in eleven chapters.

As is the case with most spiritual personalities, Sri Abhinava Vidyatirtha kept the details of his practices and attainments to himself for a long time; and, as is also the case with many of them, he divulged them to one of his devoted disciples—in this case the author of the book under review. So the au-

thenticity of the facts contained in the book is beyond doubt. The dialogues between the swami and his disciple are recorded in the sequence in which the events of the swami's life occurred, and are interspersed with profuse quotations in Sanskrit from the scriptures and orthodox tradition. The time and place where the conversations took place are also mentioned.

Lord Shiva is purported to have appeared to the swami in dream on seven consecutive nights, starting from the night before his *sannyāsa dīkṣā*, and instructed him in all the various techniques of hatha yoga. Five years later, according to the book, the swami reached a stage where he experienced the obliteration of the threefold distinction between the act of concentration, the concentrator and the object of concentration, which he calls *laya yoga*. Thereafter the swami began to frequently experience high states of samadhi, the genuineness of which was confirmed by none other than his great guru, Sri Chandrashekhara Bharati. In fact, Sri Abhinava Vidyatirtha was restrained by his guru from entering still deeper states of samadhi so that he could properly discharge the work destiny had ordained for him—that of serving his guru, his monastery and the traditions it stood for.

Advanced aspirants can find in this book really helpful explanations of difficult points of yoga theory and some invaluable hints on spiritual practice, all given in very simple language. The subject of *savikalpa samādhi* and *nirvikalpa samādhi* gets special attention. The enumeration of the distinctions between the two follows the *Sarasvatī-rahasya Upa-niṣad* and the *Dṛg-dṛśya-viveka*, but Sri Abhinava Vidyatirtha puts the ideas in a more understandable language. It is the swami's originality and authenticity that make this little book live up to its title.

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Namakam, Camakam, Puruṣasūktam. Kalluri Suryanarayana. Sankhyayana Vidya Parishat, 2-12-34 Annapoorna Colony, Uppal, Hyderabad 500 039. 1997. 156 pp. Rs 126.

The book under review is divided into five parts: Introduction, *Namakam*, *Camakam*, *Puruṣasūktam* and *Rudra-dhyāna-stutiḥ*.

The collection of mantras found in *Namakam* and *Camakam* pertain to the Vedic god Rudra. *Namakam* is found in the fourth chapter of the *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda Taittiriya Saṁhitā* and *Camakam* in its seventh sub-chapter. *Namakam* is so called since the word *namaḥ* occurs after each epithet of Rudra, and *Camakam* because the words *ca me* follow each category mentioned in the text.

Namakam contains prayers to Rudra. The god is described as omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. Just as watering the root of the tree nourishes the whole tree, worship of Śiva pleases all other gods. The chanting of the *Namaka* mantras wards off evil from the surrounding environment and vouchsafes prosperity. An important mantra points to the essential unity of all human beings—fisherman, slave, gambler, cheat—since, as a manifestation of the all-pervading Brahman, Śiva resides in all beings.

Camakam highlights the ideal of human happiness. Chanting it is believed to instil courage in one who is faced with adverse situations and bring about general spiritual elevation.

The *Puruṣasūktam* of the *R̥gveda* with its well known imagery of the Supreme Being as an ongoing cosmic sacrifice, is of great philosophical importance. According to this *sūktā* all the *varṇas*, or castes, have emanated from the Supreme Being; so no caste is superior or inferior to the rest. The social relevance of these mantras hardly needs elaboration.

In Sri Suryanarayana's book the original texts are given in Sanskrit with word-for-word meaning, English transliteration and translation. His interpretation of the mantras mainly follows the views of famous Vedic commentators like Sāyaṇa. Those interested in chanting the texts will find the notations useful.

The timeliness of the book's publication cannot go unnoticed. Knowledge of the Vedas is diminishing in the land of their birth; differences between

men are being emphasized. The author has contributed his mite to overcoming this unfortunate condition.

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Clear Light of Bliss. Geshe Kelsang Gyatso. Motilal Banarsidass, 41-UA Jawahar Nagar, New Delhi 110 007. 1999. xi + 307 pp. Rs 195.

Clear Light of Bliss is a technical work of tantric Mahayana Buddhism, which teaches a special type of Vajrayana meditation technique. This technique has been termed Mahamudra. The author is an accomplished tantric master. The tantric techniques in the book were handed over to the Tibetan masters by the Indian masters, and are considered secret techniques. The main theme of the book is to teach Mahamudra, a special meditation technique, requiring many preliminary practices. There are four preliminaries listed in the introduction itself, though no details are given. For details, one has to resort to the guides on this subject themselves. Then come the Mahamudra practices, which are meditations on (a) the union of Bliss and Emptiness; (b) the union of the Two Truths (elucidated in the book); and (c) the union of No More Learning.

As the author writes in his preface, 'to attain pure realizations of Mahamudra it is not sufficient merely to read these instructions. First we must train in the stages....' And training is impossible without resorting to proper teachers, who are rare in modern times.

The book can be considered a fair introduction to the tantric Mahamudra of the Vajrayana system. Je Tsongkhapa was a great tantric teacher, whose work is the basis of the author's book.

There are 25 beautiful illustrations of the teachers, along with translations of some Vajrayana prayers for Mahamudra to the lineage of the gurus. There is a Tibetan version of the Mahamudra in the appendix, along with a helpful glossary of technical terms and index of contents.

Practitioners of tantric Buddhism will find this book immensely interesting.

Swami Sunirmalananda
Belur Math

Ramayana and Modernity. D M Sinha. Sterling Publishers, L-10 Green Park Extension, New Delhi 110016. 1998. viii + 207 pp. Rs 250.

Both the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are interwoven with the cultural heritage of India. They are considered to be two important and significant historical epics (*itihasa granthas*) in Sanskrit literature which exerted considerable influence in shaping and moulding the Indian cultural life. There are different versions of the *Ramayana* written in different languages in India and also in other countries. Valmiki, the *adi kavi* (first poet) of India, first composed the story of Rama in lucid and elegant Sanskrit, which captured the imagination of poets and artists, common people and scholars, spiritual aspirants and followers of virtuous life. *Ramayana* is considered to be the *adi kavya* as well as *veda kavya* in India. Despite the fact that Indian society has undergone many changes since the time of its first composition, this epic continues to fascinate the human mind. As a matter of fact, the *Ramayana* is not a historical work and it is fruitless to trace its historicity. The author D M Sinha himself admits that 'Any attempt to discover historicity in them would not be so useful as a contemplative effort to pick out those elements which make human life divine and rich in quality.' The *Ramayana* is essentially an integral part of Hindu mythology, and mythology is embodied in each ancient religion in order to function as a life-giving inspiration and guidance to the followers of that particular religion. Be that as it may, the *Ramayana* is said to contain the quintessence of Vedic wisdom, which is believed to enable mankind to attain complete freedom, peace and bliss in this life. Rama's character is portrayed in historical narratives, interesting legends and highly instructive parables so as to place before mankind perfect and ideal manhood, 'exemplifying devotion to parents, dedication to kingdom, the sacredness of marital life', for guiding man's personal conduct and social behaviour.

Of the different versions of the *Ramayana*, the book under review is written following the pattern set forth in the *Ramcharitmanas* of the poet Tulsidas, which is very popular amongst the Hindi-speaking population of India. In all, there are 31 chapters in this book narrating different episodes of the *Ramayana*, beginning with the dialogue between

Shiva and his consort Sati. Thereafter the *raison d'être* of the incarnation of the Lord as Rama is described following the mythological accounts recorded in various Hindu religious scriptures. The episodes and incidents which occurred after the birth of Rama and his three brothers are delineated meticulously in convenient chapters till the end. The style of presentation is very attractive and impressive. An important feature of this work is that each episode which is described in Valmiki's *Ramayana* and Tulsidas' *Ramcharitmanas* is presented in this book in a very concise manner and in lucid language without distortion. Another distinguishing feature of this book is that the author has deduced certain practical and ethical implications from each significant episode narrated in the *Ramayana* and included them in the conclusion of each chapter. Obviously these are relevant more to those who are inclined to accept a spiritualistic interpretation of life and the universe. However, the author has shown unusual intellectual acumen and insight in deducing these implications. His intention is obviously to exhibit that the ethical teachings latent in the *Ramayana* have not lost their contemporary relevance and can very well answer the problems which confront our modern social existence and spiritual life. Perhaps here lies the justification of the title of the book, although the connotation of the concept 'modernity' is far more comprehensive than what is suggested here. Any attempt at further study and investigation of both the epics from different points of view is a welcome development, for this might dispel religious bigotry and communal frenzy which threaten our present political and social life. It is hoped that the *Ramayana* might send out 'powerful vibrations of peace and joy which dispel the gloom encircling human minds of the modern world'.

The paper, printing and binding of the present work are extremely good. The glossary of spiritual terms used in this book is an important addition. The reviewer feels that Sinha's *Ramayana and Modernity* is a significant contribution which can be profitably studied by scholars and laymen alike. The publishers deserve all praise for their present enterprise.

Prof Ranjit Kumar Acharjee
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Kailashahar

❧ Reports ❧

Inaugurated. The newly built monks' quarters at Ramakrishna Ashrama, Mymensingh, Bangladesh, by Srimat Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, on 22 February.

Launched. A website of Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, Coimbatore. Its address is www.srkv.org.

Visited. Sri Babu Paramanand, Governor of Haryana; Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Cherrapunji, on 2 April. He addressed a meeting organized on the occasion.

Opened. The new polyclinic building at Ramakrishna Math, Pune, by Swami Atmasthanandaji, on 4 April.

Inaugurated. The newly built maternity block of Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Vrindaban, by Swami Smarananandaji, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, on 7 April. On the same day, Sri Shyamal Kumar Sen, Chief Justice of Uttar Pradesh, declared open a new dental unit at the hospital.

Celebrated. Centenary of Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Kankhal, from 7 to 12 April. Swami Atmasthanandaji inaugurated the celebrations and released a commemorative souvenir. Revered Maharaj also gave benedictory addresses at the medical conference, devotees' and youth conventions, and presided over the public meeting addressed by Swami Smarananandaji and Sri Narayan Datt Tiwari, Chief Minister of Uttaranchal. A colourful traditional procession with caparisoned elephants, horses and decorated car-

riages, organized with the help of local *akharas*, was a big attraction. About 700 monks (including 80 of our Order) and hundreds of devotees attended the 6-day function.

Opened. An intensive care unit at Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Kankhal, by Swami Atmasthanandaji, on 11 April.

Inaugurated. A new housing complex of 78 flats built by Ramakrishna Mission Seva Pratishthan in Bagmari, North Kolkata, by Srimat Swami Gahananandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, on 14 April. The complex will rehabilitate slum-dwellers living adjacent to the hospital, and the land vacated by them will be used for the hospital extension. Srimat Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj, President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, and Swami Gahananandaji gave benedictory addresses at a meeting organized in connection with this function. Swami Smarananandaji presided over the meeting and former West Bengal chief minister Sri Jyoti Basu and West Bengal health minister Dr Surjya Kanta Mishra spoke.

Laid. Foundation-stone for the proposed extension of the library-cum-lecture hall at Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Allahabad, by Uttar Pradesh governor Sri Vishnukant Shastri, on 21 April.

Organized. A 2-day seminar-cum-workshop on 'Blood Donor Motivation and Safe Transfusion Practices', by Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Lucknow, on 26 and 27 April. Sri Vishnukant Shastri presided over the inaugural session.

Dedication of the Universal Temple of Sri Ramakrishna, Pune

The new Sri Ramakrishna temple at Ramakrishna Math, Pune, was consecrated by Srimat Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj, on 21 April (Ramanavami Day). Based on a novel architectural concept, the temple has a marble image of Sri Ramakrishna.

The week-long programme began with the 3-day Vishnu Panchayatana Yaga on 19 April. Spe-



cial puja and homa, Vedic chanting, Kalasharohanam, *arati* and Ramanama Sankirtanam were held, and prasad was sumptuously distributed. A splendid procession and attractive cultural programmes, featuring well-known figures like Pandits Rajan and Sajan Mishra of Delhi and Sri Anup Jalota of Mumbai, lent colour to the function. A seminar on 'Vivekananda and the Present Age' and a 'Parliament of Religions' were arranged. There were also daily public meetings in which distinguished speakers, in-

cluding former Chief Justice of India Sri P N Bhagavati and Dr Raja Ramanna, MP, focused on themes ranging from science and spirituality to religion and society.

At the public meeting of the 20th, Swami Gahananandaji released a commemorative volume and a few of the centre's publications. On the 21st, after the temple dedication, Revered Maharaj inaugurated the Swami Shivananda Memorial Hall below the new temple. In the evening, Most Revered President Maharaj chaired the day's public meeting. The other speakers were Swami Smarananandaji and Union urban development minister Sri Ananth Kumar, who also released a special postal cover and four new stamps to mark the occasion.



Nearly 350 monastics and 15,000 devotees who came from all over India witnessed the consecration ceremony, while the daily programmes drew close to 5000 people. Built with the help of generous donations and voluntary service offered by numerous friends and devotees, the temple now stands as a monument to the timeless message of Sri Ramakrishna.